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Construction of the Subject in Handke and Müller

by

Christopher Curtis Eaket

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Chris Eaket

Chris Eaket
385 26th St. W.
Prince Albert, Saskatchewan S6V 4R4

APRIL 12, 2001

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Construction of the Subject in Handke and Müller" by Christopher Eaket in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Rosalind Kerr – Supervisor

Piet Défraeye – Committee Member

Holger Pausch – Committee Member

Barbara Coleman - Chair

April 6, 2001

Abstract

This thesis analyses the notion of subjectivity and the means by which it is constructed in Peter Handke's *Kaspar* and Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine*. Two major German language playwrights, Handke's linguistic philosophy and Müller's revisionist Brechtianism mark divergent attitudes on the creation of meaning in post-World War II Germany. How each author deals with the formation of subjectivity in their works is grounded in their emphasis on various issues of language, material conditions, and psychology, as informed by the historical conditions of a divided Germany. Developmental and Lacanian psychoanalytic theories of subject formation are used to explain Handke's position as well as Wittgensteinian linguistics. Müller's work is explored through a Brechtian and Deleuzian framework. Both playwrights' works are seen as trajectories of thought on subjectivity whose synthesis points towards a new concept of the theatrical and psychological subject.

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Introduction

The Construction of the Subject in Handke and Müller

"I stood at shore and talked with the surf BLABLA,
the ruins of Europe behind me"

Heiner Müller, *Hamletmachine*

The end of Enlightenment rationality and the beginnings of postmodernism intersect at the same historical site: Auschwitz, Germany. The collapse of controlling "grand narratives," linear history and the belief in mechanistic "progress" all find their terminus at the end of the railroad tracks leading to the concentration camps of Nazi Germany. The effect of the Holocaust was not only the incomprehensible extermination of six million Jews at the hands of the Nazis, but a shock wave that would traumatize all of European rationalist thought. Notions of rationality, humanity, discourse and representation would not, and could not, ever be the same again.

Lyotard asserts in the *The Differend* that the atrocities of the Holocaust were a historical trauma that destroyed "not only lives, buildings, and objects but also the instruments to measure earthquakes directly and indirectly" (56). Quantification, truth claims and master narratives were all called into question; thought and art "cannot be phrased in the accepted idioms" after the destruction of the rationalist "instruments of measurement" and in the face of inexplicable atrocity (Lyotard 57). Progress, knowledge, scientific rationalism and the nature of the subject itself were all thrown into doubt at the endpoint of the Enlightenment.

The new "instruments of measurement" become repetition, simultaneity, pastiche and an effacement of the "unified subject" in favor of multiple perspectives, marginalia, schizophrenia. The aesthetics of postmodernism are the aesthetics of (historical) trauma. Presence and absence, dialectical humanity and memory must be radically reframed to account for the unspeakable.

Traumatic memory and postmodern history is experienced as a compulsive repetition *deprived of narrative and origin,* a series of "disconnected fragments", as "disconnected body states and sensations" torn from the event which caused them (Malkin 1999: 29). Psychologist Cathy Caruth claims that what distinguishes traumatic memory is "the force of its affront to understanding" which guarantees both the truth of the event and the truth of its incomprehensibility (qtd in Malkin 1999:31). The sense of "time" so prized by the Modernists explodes into the postmodern "space" of the body; eternal return becomes possession and history, a series of Foucauldian symptoms of power and repression.

Under such conditions the concept of the subject changes dramatically. Deleuze and Guattari seem to suggest in *Anti-Oedipus* that the subject is the dialectic of a connective (desiring) body and the pattern creating (Gestaltist) mind: territorialization and deterritorialization respectively. Their synthesis is the creation of meaning, a mapping of the environment and the creation of (genealogical) history (see Deleuze & Guattari 1977). But the unspeakable creates a gap: that which cannot be known or mapped. The effect of the gap (trauma) on the synthetic process of the creation of meaning is cultural and individual schizophrenia.

Theatre is always already about the creation of the subject and the creation of

meaning; it reflects the social/material conditions and notions of humanity extant in the culture. If Aushwitz, and by extension Germany, is ground zero for postmodernism, then the creation of the schizoid subject and the crisis of representation should be particularly evident in German theatre. Peter Handke's *Kaspar* and Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine* are forceful representations of postmodern subjectivity and ringing indictments of Modernist "master narratives". The plays and their authors' positions geographically, historically, politically and intellectually make them apt indicators of the shift in European thought after World War II.

My interest here is in examining the theories and theatrical practices that Handke and Müller employ in their writing and directing to illustrate the postmodern schizophrenic subject in an historical context. This thesis is in many ways the culmination of my work in trying to (re)connect theatre and (anti)psychiatry, in order to liberate theatre from its current cultural role as "product" and (re)situate it as a means of creating individual genealogical meaning (following Foucault's notions of history). It is my view that theatre should be both therapeutic and instructive, both progressive and political. If the trauma of history is to have any bearing on art, it should (at the very least) force us to confront ourselves and the society we have created, and question the construction of both relentlessly.

The political division of Germany after World War II is, in a way, a metaphor of the cultural schizophrenia of postmodernism and our confrontation with new ways of creating meaning. The Berlin Wall in many ways marked the trauma of modern history and the refusal of political ideologies—both Capitalist and Communist—to reconcile the contradictions of Enlightenment thought. The Wall was a symbol of the cultural

schizophrenia that Müller and Handke's theatre explores. The destruction of the Berlin Wall in 1989 did not mark the end of this type of questioning but rather its deferral by Global Capitalism and a temporary postponement of revolutionary change.

The division of West and East Germany, and the types of questioning that would come about in them, is symbolized for me in the works of the Austrian/West German Peter Handke (1942-) and the East German Heiner Müller (1929-1995). Handke, the phenomenological and linguistic philosopher, wants a theatre that can change individual spectators' perceptions through language; Müller, the revisionist Brechtian, wants the audience to question the constructed nature of society and teleological history. Occupying dialectical ends of the revolutionary spectrum—Handke wants revolution from within and Müller from without—their juxtaposition shows the divergence of thought in Germany and in postmodernism in general. Central to both, however, are the importance of exposing power structures, questioning representation and attempting to find a new form of subjectivity in an era when all meaning is placed in question. These commonalities will be looked at in an attempt to find a synthesis in the methodologies and notions of subjectivity of these two authors.

Chapter One deals with the backgrounds of Handke and Müller and gives brief explanations of their previous work and aesthetics. Particular attention is paid to the contexts of their writing and ideological backgrounds, specifically the use of Formalism and the linguistics of Ludwig Wittgenstein by Peter Handke and the adaptation of Bertolt Brecht and Marxism by Heiner Müller.

Chapter Two looks in depth at the creation of the subject in Peter Handke's *Kaspar*, with particular reference to developmental and Lacanian psychoanalytic theories

of subject formation and Wittgensteinian linguistics. Handke's philosophy and position with regards to representation help to contextualize the play both critically and ideologically. Emphasis is placed on the use of stage space as it reflects a developing subjectivity, as well as emergence of the schizophrenic subject and his/her potential for resistance.

Chapter Three analyzes Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine* as an historical landscape that sets up a dialectic between those inside and outside of representation. The intertextual and dialectical nature of Müller's work is looked at utilizing Deleuzian analysis. The influence of revolutionary history as well as Müller's own politics are seen as a throughline to the play and its tactics of "flooding" the audience. An example of form reflecting content, Müller's schizoid aesthetics are examined through the lens of post-Brechtian theatre and the role of the "synthetic fragment" in creating a new art.

The Conclusion attempts to find a synthesis in a post-Cold War world between Handke's psycholinguistics and Müller's synthetic materialism. The playwrights' backgrounds are radically different, yet their shared history and overarching concern with subjectivity make them an ideal basis for comparison. Their conclusions regarding the fate of the subject after the endpoint of the Enlightenment are surprisingly similar and indicate the necessity of reformulating subjectivity for a new historical epoch.

Chapter One

Cartography[1]: Peter Handke and Heiner Müller

Part I: Peter Handke

Peter Handke was born on December 6, 1942 in Griffen, Austria during the carnage of World War II. His birth date marks the siege of Stalingrad and the year the Nazis began enacting their "final solution" in the gas chambers of Europe. Born out of wedlock, he was adopted by the German sergeant his mother married out of economic necessity. His adoptive father moved the family to his native Berlin during its darkest years at the end of World War II , where the young Handke spent his childhood years (Klinkowitz 7). One of his first memories is escaping the now Russian sector of Berlin for safe haven in Austria.

Handke's childhood was anything but happy. Financial and emotional poverty prevailed in a home where his father had control over all aspects of life. Under these circumstances there was little opportunity for individual expression. His mother, who suffered most from his father's authoritarianism, lost any sense of self and eventually committed suicide at the age of 51, writing in a short note that it was "inconceivable to go on living" (Tallmo 2). The desire for self-expression of the individual subject and his/her possible effacement through language control became a topic central to Handke's

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[1] The term "cartography" is used here to denote a mapping of the lives of the authors in order to provide a context for their work. While this format may appear teleological, it is utilized not to offer "truths" about the playwrights, but rather to show the systems of relations that contribute to their experience and writing. If the environment produces subjectivity, then it is important to recognize the social and linguistic environments that construct Handke and Müller as subjects.

life and work.

Handke's early impulse was to enter the priesthood, but he left the seminary after an argument with one of his superiors. He began attending the University of Graz with the intention of receiving a law degree in 1961. His time at the academy was spent studying logical positivism[2], modern literature and writing at the expense of his legal studies. His early love of writing is evidenced in a letter written to the highly regarded literary magazine *Der Spiegel.* After finally being mentioned in their publication he wrote: "Ever since I was little, it has been my desire to appear in your magazine. It seemed to me that to be mentioned in *Der Spiegel* was one of the most worthwhile aims for an author to aspire to" (qtd. in Hern 17). Successful in the literary field, Handke never completed his law degree.

Handke's early writing reveals a preoccupation with oppression, possibly a response to the silencing he experienced while growing up. His early experimental work, *Martial Law*, (1964) incorporates quotations from a text on criminal law to show how representation dehumanizes subjects by turning them into linguistic objects. Handke was intrigued by the way in which an individual's death could be—through language—completely distantiated, ritualized and abstracted:

> I found the law concerning martial law in a penal code: The abstract form of representation of a ritualized death captured my imagination.

---

[2] Logical Positivism is associated with the Vienna circle of the 1920s. It takes meaning as the prime topic of inquiry which must be obtained through empirical or logical proof. Their goal was to determine what could be firmly established through logic and the senses. Ludwig Wittgenstein and O. Neurath in particular were concerned with the limits of language in describing reality (Lacey 262).

> The logical sequence of the sentences were basically all *conditional* clauses for a concrete, conceivable reality, that is, clauses which were to be used if the state of affairs specified in them occurred in reality, appeared to me utterly threatening and oppressive. (qtd. in Hern 15)

This quotation is an early example of Handke's full understanding of the power of representation. As Handke learned, language—despite being a second order reality—has the authority to proscribe and prescribe action. Not only is the subject made into an abstract entity through representation, but his/her courses of action are immediately limited and structured by the legalistic discourse. Language does not and cannot exactly correspond to the subjective circumstances of the accused, but it still has the power to command their execution. Furthermore, the conditional nature of the language structures thought and action into a teleological form. This total regulation of death and dying disturbed Handke since representation here replaces the real with a linear and conditional fiction, without regard for the actual living subject.

It was also at the University of Graz that Handke became involved in a literary group known as the Graz Group (*Grazer Gruppe*), who encouraged his interest in literature and linguistic philosophy. "A sometimes raucous and nearly always iconoclastic assemblage of poets, dramatists, fictionists, artists and intellectuals," the Graz Group was recognized at the time as the most prestigious literary circle in Austria. Its predecessor, the Vienna Group (*Wiener Gruppe*), had been destroyed under Nazi Germany, but the Graz attempted to keep alive their concern of "the resuscitation of a language left breathless by its blatant propagandistic misuse" (Schlueter 1981:7). Both

groups were highly influenced by Austria's tradition of Logical Positivism, particularly the works of Karl Kraus, Fritz Mauthner and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Together the Graz sought to emphasize the *precision* of language and philosophical implications of its use, rather than to concentrate on its more dangerous transcendental evocations (Klinkowitz 6-7). The focus on individual existential concerns crossed with linguistic philosophy became the focus of the Graz, and of Peter Handke.

When the dominant trend of Austrian and German writing seemed to move away from philosophical concerns and into conservative realism and authoritarian morality, Handke was one of the first to launch an indictment of such writing (Klinkowitz 9). Traveling to a Princeton conference in 1966 to accuse the established German writers of Group 47 of their betrayal of philosophical ideals, the young upstart's accusations would become infamous. Attacking what he saw as dull moral realism and an adherence to traditional forms, Handke blasted the Group's aesthetics as "trifling and idiotic." He charged Group 47 with being overly conservative and registering "boredom at every attempt at something different" (Hern 17). The writers, still reacting to Nazism, considered "concern with form at the expense of moral content...almost criminal" (Schlueter 1981:5). Group 47 had begun to take the path of nostalgic moral realism rather than devote itself to the type of phenomenological examination that Handke and the Graz envisioned. "People fail to recognize that literature is made with language and not with the things that are described by language" Handke objected (Hern 17). Therefore German literature's flight into historical realism was at best misguided, if not totally delusional. At the age of twenty-three, Peter Handke was advocating that Germany's greatest writers take up a radically new vision comprised of a mix of phenomenology,

linguistic philosophy and Formalist experimentation that would become the New Sensibility.[3]

In the literary magazine, *konkret,* Handke clarified his position, saying that he was not against description *per se,* but rather the way in which it was used by the German realists:

> In this new, up-and-coming type of literature [New Realism], things are described without one's thinking about language except in grammatical categories of word choice etc. And criticism does not measure the truth of literature on the basis of whether the words by which the objects are described are correct but on whether the objects "correspond to reality." Thus the words for the objects are taken for the objects themselves. One ponders over the objects which one calls "reality," but not the words, which are in fact the reality of literature. (qtd. in Schlueter 1981:5)

For the young Handke, literature must be recognized as self-contained artifice. As such, it can be phenomenologically "bracketed" and examined as a self-referential entity. This is how one discovers what language is and how it works. Handke saw the New Realists as misguided in presenting literary reality as "true" when it is always only representation.

---

[3] New Sensibility or New Subjectivity as it is often called takes on a variety of forms in German writing. All however are marked by a turn away from overt politics to a inward directed "spontaneous-sensitive" impulse in the 1960s and 1970s. The work corresponds with that of Handke, Botho Straus and Thomas Bernhard in particular, where the American equivalent is Joseph Bueys (Calandra 16-7). It should be noted here that this brief summary of Handke's background is used to locate him historically and therefore may contain certain generalizations. For a more comprehensive overview of his early influences and development as a writer see Klinkowitz & Knowlton (1983) and Linstead (1981).

Handke saw realism's "labeling" of reality as merely a secondary function of language, whereas the use of language to "defamiliarize" or change perceptions was primary (Linstead 25).

Handke's criticism and writing above indicate that he is seeking to find new forms of representation which will produce new perceptions or "make strange" existing forms whose reception had become automatic and familiar. Handke's goal is to make individual perceptions the center of his investigations and to foreground the ways in which perceptions are shaped by language. If language structures consciousness into all too familiar forms and can be used to efface the subject—as it does in *Martial Law*—then conversely it can also be used to break familiar perceptual habits and engender a new sense of awareness in the subject. If language regimes can repress to the point of muteness—as they did with his mother Maria Handke—then they can also be used to liberate the subject into a new consciousness. Finally, if language is a "prison house"—in which the Group 47 writers began to imprison themselves—then one must bracket off its boundaries to reveal its functioning, and thereby escape its pitfalls and make full use of its capabilities.

Handke wants to create in his readers and audiences a radical defamiliarization of all sense impressions. Continual renewal of perceptions through language must not give way to the fixed (dead) forms of realism and conventional usage. The writer's task then, is to avoid obfuscation of the real and the authoritarian control of thought at all costs, while liberating language and perceptions from fixed forms.

Handke's writings can be seen for the most part as a series of experiments on the limits of language and perception. His earliest published work, *The Hornets* (*Die*

Hornisen), was published the year after he left university in 1966. The story is a newly blind man's retelling of a novel he had once read. According to one of his major critics, the reader never knows if s/he is reading the original story or the narrator's perceptions, for language cannot make the distinction between the two (Klinkowitz 20). Eventually the narrator begins to forget the visual images the words represent and reaches the "outer limits of experience" (*Hornets* 92). He loses the ability to see words as image-pictures—a connection explored by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*—and representation begins to break down. Finally estranged from any signification of outer experience, the narrator is left with pure unmediated experience. It is an experiment in linguistic deconstruction that reveals the phenomenological understanding of the writer. Subject-object distinctions break down and nothing for the narrator is "separate from myself" (*Hornets* 220). The blind man's subjectivity, his narration, and the story itself all gradually dissolve as the decay of word-images returns the subject back into an oceanic, pre-linguistic state

Handke's second novel, *The Peddler,* the one read at the Group 47 meeting, was published in 1967. Kafkaesque in content, the novel ostensibly concerns a peddler who discovers a murder and immediately becomes the prime suspect. Arrested, questioned and beaten, he escapes only to discover another murder. Deconstructing the mystery novel as a genre, it foregoes linear plot, well defined suspects and a solution to the mystery (Klinkowitz 22). It is instead designed to foreground the conventions of the mystery genre and defamilarize them, so that the novel itself becomes somewhat of a mystery. Disjointed images and abstractions are presented with no through-line; it is an amalgam of sleuth conventions that—devoid of a linear plot—"makes strange" the genre itself as it forces the reader to create a Gestalt from the "clues" of the text.

Nowhere are the influence of Formalist concepts, linguistic philosophy and the critique of representation more apparent than in Handke's *Sprechstücke* (language plays), written 1966-67. Even the term *Sprechstücke* itself foregrounds a concern with linguistic plays on words, sentences, and language as the primary focus for writing and viewing a theatre piece. The work is, in effect, meant to be seen as a linguistic artifice; it is simultaneously a deconstruction of illusionistic stage representation and a testament to ability of linguistic representation to create stage worlds "bracketed" from outside referents (Firda 13). The similarity to Brecht's *Lehrstücke* (learning plays) is almost certainly intentional, but Handke's tactics are decidedly different from Brecht's. Where Brecht's goal is the manifestation of action through the perception of social/material conditions in representation, Handke aims to change the perception of reality directly by utilizing language as a means of bringing all representation and social construction into question. Brecht's mediation occurs through the *Verfremdungseffekte* (alienation effect) whereas Handke's occurs by working the layers of language and representation on the stage. Brecht aims for a social/political awareness while Handke focuses on an awareness of language, perception and phenomenological reality.

The *Sprechstücke* then can be seen as a series of experiments in Wittgensteinian language games, foregrounding conventions and their arbitrariness, while pushing the boundaries of theatre in order to define its limits and what it is phenomenologically possible. In particular, *Offending the Audience* (*Publikumsbeschimpfung*) 1966, places the audience at the center of the action, and culminates with the hurling of verbal abuse at them in order to wake them from their voyeuristic complacency (29). It shatters the audience's horizon of expectations of going to see "a play" and observing traditional

theatrical mimesis. Handke first ensures that all seems normal, with the usual—if not overly formal—pre-show atmosphere prevailing, along with the sounds of set pieces being moved around and the like (5). However, once the curtain opens it is apparent that there are no set pieces, no props, no special lighting. The four speakers enter and rehearse hurling invectives at the audience, then fall silent and begin to speak (6-7).

After deconstructing the audience's initial expectations, the speakers foreground their lack of desire to create mimesis:

> This is not a factual report. This is no documentary play. This is no slice of life. We don't tell you a story. We don't perform any actions. We don't simulate any actions. We don't represent anything. We don't put anything on for you. We only speak. (9)

Handke tears the referent away from representation to create a purely linguistic reality on the stage (and for the audience). What is seen and heard is what exists; the theatrical exercise does not seem to refer to anything but itself. Handke "brackets" his stage in order to reveal its nature and functioning.

The playwright lampoons the concept of the Aristotelian unities, arguing that "We and you form a unity because we speak directly to you without interruption . . . That signifies unity of action". The fourth wall simply does not exist—it was a construction to begin with—a convention Handke foregrounds by showing that the actors and audience are seen to be one and the same, without the spatial distinctions of "stage" and "auditorium". There is only the one space of the theatre, and therefore there is unity of

place. As "no other time passes here than your time," there is unity of time. Therefore, Handke's speakers remark with clever irony that "this piece is classical" (20).

The traditional role of "actor" is reversed, as it soon becomes clear that the audience is the true subject and actor of the piece as they must watch and create meaning. Handke foregrounds the audience's own embodiment—and reverses their gaze—by telling them not to blink, not to salivate, not to bat their eyelashes, not to swallow and not to breathe, then ordering them to do so in order. "You are now aware of your presence," his speakers note, reversing the usual voyeuristic gaze of stage Realism (22). The speakers continue to place the audience at the center of the action by recalling for them their preparations for going to the theatre, their perceptions while watching the play up to this point and their preparations to applaud or not to applaud (28). Handke strategically foregrounds every audience convention to make it strange, to make it a self-conscious perception.

The play ends with the speakers hurling insults at the audience, but not before first warning them that "Before you leave you will be offended" (29). Catharsis is rejected as a stage convention and even the curtain call is suspended, becoming tape recorded applause as the speakers watching the audience exit.

The play became the fifth most produced play in German-speaking countries and made Handke an international sensation (Hern 9). By foregrounding every convention of the theatre to make it conspicuous and by rejecting representation, he challenged concepts of what "theatre" was, and ensured himself a place in the anti-theatrical canon.

Handke's other *Sprechstücke* include *Prophesy* (*Weissagung*) 1966, which consists of 208 tautological statements which replace abstract metaphor with literal

metonymy ("Flies will die like flies"), *Self-Accusation* (*Selbstbezichtigung*) 1966 which catalogues self-reflexively the sins of 'I', including the breaking of linguistic conventions, and *Calling for Help* (*Hilferufe*) 1967, which maps the territory of signifying chains surrounding the word "help" without naming it (Schlueter 10). Handke explains that the *Sprechstücke* are "autonomous prologues to the old plays"; "They do not want to revolutionize, but to make aware" (Klinkowitz 109). He believes that the writer should manipulate linguistic structures in order to foreground the social expectations and behaviours that govern consciousness and the viewing of theatre.

Such an interpretation carries over into Peter Handke's full length experimental plays, specifically *Kaspar* (1968) on the process of socialization and ordering inherent in language acquisition[4]. *My Foot, My Tutor* (*Das Mündel will Vormund sein*) 1969, is a mute and gestic examination of power/control and master/slave relationships; *Whatever you say; feel free* (*Quodlibet*) 1970 is a "single living movement of speech" where language takes on visual, kinetic form; and *The Ride Across Lake Constance* (*Der Ritt über den Bodensee*) 1970, is a study of the efficacy of social communication in relationships meditated by inaccurate language (Firda 21-9). These early plays show the broad range of Handke's theatrical work and his use of the stage as an experimental linguistic and phenomenologically "bracketed" space.

This brief outline of Handke's other early theatrical works is given to show the range of subjects, critical views and tactics he used in leading up to *Kaspar*. A discussion of his more recent works and directions Handke is taking today can be found Appendix I.

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[4] The topic of socialization and language acquisition in *Kaspar* will be dealt with at length in Chapter Two I deal with this work in particular because of its overarching concern with subject formation and the way in which Handke utilizes the stage to critique representation in general.

Part II: Heiner Müller

Heiner Müller, a writer thirteen-years older than Peter Handke, who fought in World War II and lived in East Berlin, took a very different path in his writing than his Austrian counterpart. Growing up under the Nazi regime, then later living under the repression and imperfect socialism of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Müller's work is directly informed by the nightmarish history of 20th century Europe. He was born on January 9, 1929 in Eppendorf, a small town in southern Germany where his father, an office worker, was a political activist involved with the Social Democratic Party in the Weimar Republic. Müller had just turned four when Hitler became Chancellor of the German Reich, on January 30, 1933. The following night at 4:00 a.m., Müller's father was arrested from his bed:

> Through the crack of the door I watched as as a man hit my father
> in the face. Shivering, blanket up to my chin, I laid in bed when
> the door to my room opened. My father was standing in the
> doorway, behind him the strangers, big, in brown uniforms...
> I heard him call softly my name. I didn't answer and kept very quiet.
> Then my father said: He is asleep. The door was closed.
>
> (qtd. in Weber 1984:19)

In an interview, Müller reflected on this earliest of memories: "That is my guilt. I pretended I was sleeping. This really is the first scene of my theatre" (Weber 1984:19). Images of separation, loss and betrayal occur repeatedly in Müller's life and work.

Visiting his father in a concentration camp a year after his arrest, Müller recalls an image that burned into his memory: the sight of his father's pale face behind the wire fence, contrasted with the plump face of the guard. Müller himself became a prisoner of war of the Americans in the waning years of World War II, before quietly walking away back to his hometown. After the War his father, accused of being a "Titoist" by the Socialist Unity party, fled to West Berlin in 1951. His son met him in a hospital, where the elder Müller was in isolation for exposure to a bacteria: "We talked through a glass door. He was standing on one side of the glass and I was standing on the other side. That was the next image" (Weber 1984:22). Muller's work is fittingly described as being about the "German Schizophrenia" which refers to both the division of Germany into East and West in 1949 and the physical separation of those two countries by the Berlin Wall in 1961. The impact of these two events, and their repercussions on the German psyche is a recurring theme throughout Müller's life and work.

The history of Germany is intimately tied to Heiner Müller, who once described his life's work as being a "seismograph"; that is, a recorder that measures meticulously (Kluge 6). Where other writers in Germany, particularly West Germany, sought to obfuscate material and social conditions, they are forgrounded through images of power and landscape omnipresent in Müller's work (Marranca 71). In a postmodern era where people have forgotten how to think historically (Jameson i), Müller confronts history directly: "German history is my enemy, and I want to stare into the white of its eye" (Economist 90). In his roles of devoted Marxist and the heir of Brecht's legacy, Müller's work perpetually seeks to illustrate contradictions, difference, dialectics and historical processes in order to "create an arena for action to combat the acceleration of forgetting"

(Teschke 1998:13).

Müller's relationship to Brecht and GDR socialism is ambiguous at best. While he accepts Brecht's socio-political principles and aesthetics, he rejected the need to strictly conform to them. As a pupil of Brecht, he suggested that one must "reject it, in order to possess it"; that is, one must not hold Brecht in such high regard that further dialectical development of his principles is not possible. In his essay "To Use Brecht Without Criticizing Him is to Betray Him," Müller viewed Brecht as becoming a "father figure of socialist cultural policy", so enshrined as the "master" that the dialectical process he wished for was becoming stagnant (33). Müller expressed an affinity towards Beckett, Artaud, surreralism and the "bourgeois" avant-garde—a comment which shocked his GDR contemporaries—but it is an affinity based on being able to adapt their work into a materialist drama (Girshausen 405).

Perhaps the greatest difference between Brecht and Müller is that Brecht wrote of the dialectical contradictions and the necessity of change within capitalist society, whereas Müller wrote on the multiple contradictions in the GDR and the necessity of change under socialism. For Brecht the socialist state was the ultimate utopian goal of his theatre, for Müller it was an already existing fact that needed to be reworked, contextualized and put in historical perspective.

The GDR for Müller was not the absolute Utopia Brecht had dreamed of; the contradictions of the state bureaucracy and the world outside its borders were still worthy of criticism and development. Müller, countering charges of "historical pessimism", remarked that "the course of events is inevitable only if the system is not placed in question", which is perhaps the best indicator of the author's sentiments (Girshausen

418). Brecht, the GDR and socialism could only reach their full potential if and only if they were continually "placed in question" and not allowed to backslide into being totalizing discourses. It was a view that would put him at odds with orthodox Brechtians as well as GDR socialists, although both would eventually accept him as one of their own.

Müller's earliest full-length play, *The Scab* (*Die Lohndrucker*) 1956, written in collaboration with his wife Inge, begins where Brecht left off. While Müller was unaware of Brecht's attempts to dramatize the same material (in the *Büsching* fragment) the work is obviously Brechtian. Taking Hans Garbe, a folkloric hero-worker of Germany, Müller quickly raises dialectical questions and multiplies contradictions. Balke, the Garbe figure of the play, is not the unproblematic hero of German mythology. Set in the early GDR, Balke had denounced the factory's Party Secretary during the Nazi period, when Balke worked just as hard for different masters. He is attacked by his co-workers for being so productive that he is driving down their wages bringing into question the brotherhood of workers (Barnett 1999:1). The country appears grossly mismanaged, as the GDR did at the time of the play's conception. It strikes at the heart of the conflict between the Utopian ideology of the GDR and the harsh reality of workers living under the socialist regime.

Similar dialectics play off against each other in Müller's subsequent work, a comedy entitled *The Resettler* (*Die Umsiedlerin*) 1961. The scenes counterpoint each other critiquing the collectivization of agriculture in the 1950's. In this case Müller's humourous critique of the expected utopia, by pointing his finger at the bad leadership and ongoing oppression of the peasants worked all too well: the play was closed down

after its first performance and the playwright was blacklisted by the German government. Müller would never try his hand at straight comedy again.

When Müller returned to writing plays two years later, after spending two years as an "undesirable"—expelled from the Writer's Union and ostracized by the artistic community—he wrote *The Construction Site* (*Die Bau*)1963 which utilized many of the same themes as *The Scab*. Putting into question the failed dialectic between individualism and collectivization by revealing the problems of production facing the GDR, the play was quickly attacked by the German establishment. Erich Honecker, representing the SED Central Committee, attacked artists including Müller for spreading "nihilistic, hopeless, and morally subversive philosophies in literature, film, theatre, television, and magazines" (Weber 1984:26). An attempted première of the playtext at the Deutsches Theatre in Lipzig was quickly cancelled and the play did not get produced until 1980 at the Volksbühne.

Due to his chastisement and fear of being blacklisted again, Müller attempted a radical change of aesthetics after *The Construction Site*. Instead of relying on Brecht's variation of socialist realism, he instead turned to Brecht's notion of "material"—using texts "as inducements to work rather than private property"—in order to create a new kind of intertextual theatre. He began to rework classical texts in order to expose "barbaric historical realities" inherent in them and by laying bare the social conditions and repression that exists beneath the text (Teschke 1999:154). In effect Müller reworked the Brechtian parable to be a "dialogue with the dead" that would not efface the past and valorize a (socialist) future, but keep the dialectic going by endlessly questioning the repeating patterns of history (Gishausen 418).

Heracles 5 and *Philloctetes* (*Philoktet*) 1966 mark this shift in Müller's work, both weave history, mythology and intertext together to form a new kind of theatre. *Philoctetes* is his first *Lehrstücke*, a variation on Brecht's worker aesthetic, and can be seen as another attempt by Müller to find the "other" Brecht, the one that was not extolled—and therefore ossified—by the GDR establishment. The play is Müller's first use of "material" to expose the hidden ideologies of the property system, and his first use of the suffering/traumatized body onstage as the primary materialist referent.

Philoctetes, along with his adaptation of the *Dragon Opera* 1966 with Paul Dessau and his *Oedipus Tyrant* (*Ödipus Tyrann*) 1967, solidified Müller's reputation as a major dramatist in the German language. After producing his second Lehrstücke, *The Horation* (*Der Horatier)* 1968, and *Prometheus* 1969, (produced at the Zurich *Spielhaus*) Müller was asked to join the Berliner Ensemble as Dramaturg, and rumors of his being the "heir to Brecht" began (Weber 1984:27). These plays mark a shift in Müller's critical stance departing from the outdated simplicity of the Brechtian dialectial method (Teschke 1999:156). The totalizing nature of the dialectical method was seen as subsuming the past into a simple framework that inevitably produced a Utopian socialist state, which Müller's GDR was not (Malkin 1999:72). The arsenal of history coupled with multiple viewpoints becomes the means by which we are made aware of historical conditions, not the binary dialectics of Brecht. It was Müller's updating of Brecht to fit a world where "black and white" no longer applied, aligning him with post-structuralism and postmodernism as well as Marxism. At the point Müller was being heralded as the heir to Brecht, he was ironically beginning to alter his dramaturgy away from that of his predecessor.

Müller's plays of the early to mid 1970s mark the shift into the realm of the "synthetic fragment", utilizing pastiche and distillation of text to create the *mise-en-scene*. As well, he begins adopting Artaudian "total theatre" elements into his productions, attempting to "flood" his audience with stimuli. "I think that we can proceed now only through flooding (or inundation) . . . pack[ing] more into a play than the viewer can carry", with the intended effect of putting the individual audience member in the difficult role of choosing "what to carry first" (Fehervary 96). With *Germania, Death in Berlin* (*Germania Tod in Berlin*) 1971, *Germania, The Battle* (*Germania, Der Schlacht*) 1974 and *Gundling's Life Fredrick of Prussia Lessing's Sleep Dream Scream* (*Leben Gundlings Friedrich von Preussen Lessings Schlaf Traum Schrei*) 1976 Müller manages to carry out this inundation by carpet bombing his audience with images, textual fragments and bits of information. The two *Germanias* explore the history of German fascism from 1918-1945, confronting Germans with blindly following Teutonic mythology and concepts of "German-ness" and "duty". *Grundling's Life* explores the Prussian Empire's influence on Germanic thought, as well as the dialectic of the Enlightenment[5]. Müller attempts to show how the German subject has been historically constructed.

Müller's plays of the late 1970s created a new type of theatre, arguably a synthesis of his previous Brechtian realism and intertextual "material" phases. Often called "Bewußtseinsland-schaften," or landscapes of consciousness (Lehmann 201), the plays mark the intensification of Müller's dredging of the collective memory of Europe (Weber

[5] Müller's work here parallels Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's *Dialectic of the Enlightenment* which claims that the science, technology and Humanism produced by the 18th century Enlightenment would over time produce its opposite (ie. Nazi Germany). Individual freedom to be independent subject would eventually turn into a higher form of enslavement.

105). The trauma of history is seen as a landscape of ruins where the spaces are interchangeable but the mistakes of the past repeat again and again. The works become free floating text and image, but stress process, repetition and interpretation in order to turn the audience into a coproducer of meaning and memory (Malkin 1999:79). Müller finds a way to make a new kind of *Lehrstücke*, by transforming his work into the theatrical equivalent of an iceberg, where most of the meaning is beneath the actual text, waiting to be interpreted by each individual audience member.

Müller's aim is to "capture several of the many angles by which the content may be viewed" and turning the Brechtian dialectic into something fractal, revealing multiple patterns, ideologies and trajectories, rather than any one viewpoint (Weber 1989:15). He shifts from the gestic to the deconstructed/ing image, from history to genealogy in an attempt to replace space with a concept of time that is inextricably linked to memory. By combining traditional Brechtian Marxism with the rhizomatics of Deleuze and Guattari he shows historical processes while resisting representation. Moreover, his bombardment of the audience is intended to cause them to question social conditions—just as Brecht wanted—but the means are updated to speak to a fractured and mediatized culture. With *Hamletmachine* (*Hamletmaschine*) 1977 and *The Task* (*Der Auftrag*) 1979 Müller enters the "theatre of terrorism" phase that made him famous internationally.

Both *Hamletmachine* and *The Task* work on similar themes—failed revolution and the importance of the intellectual who divides historical eras—but with very different results. *Hamletmachine* is a remarkably dense, nine-page pastiche, filled with quotes, misquotes, allusions and metaphors. The characters overlap, trade and negate their roles with times and places changing rapidly. *The Task*, on the other hand, is much less

groundbreaking, but still manages to push the boundaries of theatre. Concerning a failed revolt in Jamaica, the play is, due to its lack of critique of the GDR bureaucracy, one of the author's only texts to be staged in the East before being shown in the West (Barnett 1999:5). Masks, role-playing and metaphors create characters-as-aggregates and ceaselessly shifting plots offer multiple perspectives and possibilities.

It is clear that Müller has moved into Artaudian territory disavowing drama in favor of theatre. The loss of history and plot as a unifying force shifts Müller's work into a new phase of image and immanence. If, as Jameson asserts, postmodernism is an era where we have "forgotten how to think historically" then Müller occupies an interesting place in the canon: a political postmodernist against the acceleration of forgetting (Jameson i). Memory and Foucauldian genealogy work to expose the faults in a totalized history, which endlessly repeats the horrors of the past. Müller stages history to explode it, and in doing so forces us into an Artaudian space beyond teleological time.

These works show the course of development of the author's work leading up to *Hamletmachine*, a play upon which he has remarked:

> From the Scab to *Hamletmachine* everything is one story, a slow process of reduction. With . . . *Hamletmachine* that's come to an end. No more dialogue exists because there is no more history. (qtd. in Kalb 107)

Hamletmachine exists as an important marker in Müller's work, even though he would continue writing until his death in 1995.[6]

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[6] A discussion of Müller's works after *Hamletmachine* (1977) will be undertaken in Apppendix II.

If Müller's death allows us to make provisional statements about his contribution to theatre, it is still far too recent to predict where he will end up on the "horizon of expectations." Handke is another matter since he is relatively young and very active in his literary career. The next two chapters, the first on Handke's *Kaspar* and the next on Müller's *Hamletmachine* will offer close readings of foundational works in their respective careers.

Chapter Two

Speech Torture: Peter Handke's *Kaspar*

Peter Handke's *Kaspar* is his first full-length and best known play. The play debuted simultaneously at the Frankfurt Theater am Turm (where the *Sprechstücke* were staged) and at the Städtische Bühne in Oberhausen on May 11, 1968. An immediate success, it was produced in four other cities that year, including Berlin as part of the Berlin Festival. It was toured by Theater am Turm, published by Suhrkamp Verlag and nominated as "Play of the Year" by the theatre magazine *Theater heute* (Hern 26). It became the most frequently performed modern play in Germany, Austria and Switzerland during the 1968-9 season. Jack Kroll referred to Handke as "the hottest young playwright in Europe" and Clive Barnes suggested that he was "one of the most important young playwrights of our time". Others heralded the play as the historic equivalent of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (Schlueter 1981:41). The author who had invented "Handke-Publicity" with his outbursts at Princeton and with his audience-offending *Sprechstücke* had once again managed to challenge his audiences and critics.

Individual actors from the Frankfurt troupe rehearsing *Kaspar* were leftist political activists, devoted to revisionist art (Firda 15). This is significant when one considers that the opening of *Kaspar* closely follows the May Day riots of Paris. Governments worried as a result of the May Day riots, the West German government was trying to implement emergency laws to contain dissent. The themes of dissent and control in *Kaspar* coincided closely with events unfolding in student protests in Germany and abroad.

The material events of 1968 had a corresponding psychological impact on the

societies in which the riots occurred. The "national psychodrama" of potential revolution played itself out as an "Oedipal"[7] revolt on a grand scale. The counter-cultural insurgence against the Establishment and the fury against paternalistic power structures with their inability to change reality through rhetoric exploded into what threatened to be a General Strike. The heteroglossia of students in an "arts and communications culture" versus the language and power of a rigid Establishment correspond to the Lacanian Imaginary and Symbolic respectively (Hampden-Turner 156). The events of 1968 represent a battle for (a new) language and the rejection of paternalistic discourse which represses new possibilities for becoming. The Oedipal script of the *theatrum mundi* playing itself out in 1968 and the battle for discourse it entails can be seen as the backdrop for Handke's spacialization of language acquisition and power structures in *Kaspar*.

Peter Handke's source material was the story of one Kaspar Hauser. Discovered in 1928 in the city of Nuremberg, the sixteen-year old child, subjected to profound neglect, had been raised in a closet apart from nearly all human contact. The child became a *cause célebrè* among the romantics of the era, who saw him as an example of "Natural Man" reared apart from human socialization. Writers as diverse as Karl Gutzkow, Paul Verlaine, George Trakl, Werner Herzog and Ernest Jandl (whose poem is the epigraph for *Kaspar*) have written about the Kaspar Hauser mythos (Klinkowitz 114). In an interview with Arthur Joseph, Handke remarked that:

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[7] "Oedipal" is used here not in the Freudian sense, but in the Lacanian. Patricide becomes the symbolic act of seizing discursive power from those in control by people on the margins who have no voice.

> Kaspar fascinated me from the start . . . For me this was a model of conduct, building a person into society's course of conduct by language, by giving him words to repeat. To enable him somehow to get along in life, to function, he is reconstructed by voices, by language models, and instruction. (Joseph 60).

Handke is careful, however, to discourage any literal or Naturalistic reading of the Hauser mythos into his play: "The play *Kaspar* does not show how IT REALLY IS OR REALLY WAS with Kaspar Hauser. It shows what is POSSIBLE with someone" (59). Likewise, he asserts that the audience will " . . . witness an event that plays only on stage and not in some other reality. They will not experience a story but watch a theatrical event (60). The author lays aside any claims of literal representation or historical imitation. The play is "bracketed"[8] from external reality so that we can ascertain what is "possible" rather than what is or was the case with Kaspar Hauser.

In "bracketing" the theatrical space, Handke is applying his practices in linguistics to the spacialized language of stage semiotics. His comment that "Words give no picture of the world . . . [they] don't point at the world as something lying outside the words but to the world of the words themselves" applies equally to the language of theatre (Schlueter 1981:5). Handke's play is set up as a type of self-contained language game, following the Wittgensteinian philosophy that had influenced him since his days with the Graz. Wittgenstein saw language as resembling a game of chess. In chess the naming of

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[8] Stemming from the phenomenology of Husserl, bracketing or *epoche* is the laying aside of preconceptions in order to understand the essence of objects or concepts (Lacey 251).

pieces—like the relationship between signifiers and signifieds in language—is entirely arbitrary, yet mutually agreed upon rules exist governing their purpose and function. The game exists as a self-contained, second-order reality (PI 108). Handke's "bracketing" of the stage is more than a phenomenological exercise, it is also a linguistic one. The language of stage semiotics becomes a suitable game-space to explore the implications of language acquisition on the subject and to show how the game of representation can quickly be taken for reality itself.

Handke utilizes representation in his play to foreground the "rules" of the game so that we can better understand their arbitrariness and the effect their internalization has on subjectivity. His critique of representation follows from Wittgenstein's move away from the Picture Theory of language with its roots in Aristotelian and Augustinian thought. There is no correlation between the word and thing it denotes, rather meaning is determined arbitrarily and through context. Where the Picture Theory held that perception precedes language, such as Adam naming all the creatures of Creation, Wittgenstein's theory of games holds that language precedes and promotes perception and the differentiation of objects (Collett 59).

That language represents a system that reconfigures our perceptions and thought patterns is an idea taken up elsewhere by Ferdinand de Saussure in linguistics, Benjamin Whorf in anthropology, George Orwell in literature, and many others. Handke utilizes it to show how thought structures, perceptions and the individual subject are created by subjecting Kaspar and his audience to a game *about* the game of language. The language-game that entraps the character of Kaspar is constantly reflected in the game Handke plays with stage space and the objects/game pieces on the stage. As Kaspar acquires

language the stage space becomes more governed by order and rules that are entirely arbitrary. The material space of the stage, the mental state of Kaspar and the speech torture he is subjected to all reflect the change in perceptions created by the internalization of language. All these factors as environment then feedback to autoproduce the subject.

We[9] are reminded that we are taking part in a game of representation as the description of the entire stage space is spoken repeatedly, over loudspeakers, as audience members enter the theatre and are seated. The stage is meant to be read as a spatialization of language, as artifice, and not as any external or representative reality. The initial stage space reflects the disconnected and disordered world of the Imaginary in which Kaspar the character exists. Without the ordering and rules of language, all proxemic (spatial) meaning on the stage is seen as arbitrary:

> The chairs stand far from the table, as though they had nothing to do with it; they do not stand at the usual angle toward each other . . . The table and its drawer face the audience.
> Elsewhere there is another table, smaller, lower, with only three legs . . . Half the sofa (from the vantage point of those sitting in the center of the auditorium) should be behind the wings, thus indicating backstage. (61)

[9] "We" here denotes a semiotic "ideal audience" who decodes and co-produces meaning by watching Handke's philosophical treatise on stage. It is used to situate the reader within the theatrical space of *Kaspar*, with the intent of foregrounding the phenomenological affects of the play on its audience.

Handke defamiliarizes symbolic notions of mimetic stage space and draws attention to our own signifying chains such as "table<-->chair" by breaking them in the stage space. Our notion of "table" as an object with a top and four legs is disturbed by this three legged version, and the sofa lying half-offstage violates our concepts of mimetic and diagetic (seen and unseen) stage space. The arrangement of the furniture, like the signifiers that represent them, is entirely arbitrary.

Further, his parenthetical "from the vantage point of the audience of those sitting in the center of the auditorium" (61) causes us to reconsider our perceptual vantage point in the theatre itself. Our own phenomenological point of view is suddenly defamiliarized as we realize that we are seeing a different set and different play from those around us. Our bodies in space are recontexualized as a series of vantage points that are relative and promote difference.

Handke goes further in disrupting and defamiliarizing our expectations of Naturalistic representation by putting onstage "a broom and a shovel, one of them bearing the clearly discernible word STAGE or the name of the theatre" (61). The audience is constantly reminded that they are in a theatre as these "real" objects are things-in-themselves as well as props. They become a reference point from which we can grade the layers of representation at work in the play.

Before we are introduced to the protagonist we are told that he is not a comedian (*Kasper* is German for clown) but rather "resembles Frankenstein's monster (or King Kong)" (60). The association between Frankenstein's monster is no accident. The Living Theatre's anarchic production of *Frankenstein* was touring Europe while Handke was writing *Kaspar* and probably influenced his writings on subjectivity and the effects of

hegemonic socialization (Schlueter 1981:48). Both Kaspar and Frankenstein exist in a liminal space between monster and child; their childlike qualities as protagonists appeal to us, but the appearance of these qualities in an adult bodies disrupts our classifying them—

they are abject[10].

The audience first sees Kaspar as he is being "birthed" through a slit in the curtain. He is quite literally newborn, in the sense that he has no existence outside of the theatrical frame; he has no history or previous "life" outside of the text. As a pre-linguistic subject, Kaspar is polymorphic, lacking any subject-object distinctions. He is contiguous with everything he touches, like the newborn child and its mother. This continuity of subject-object is a kind of Edenic naiveté; Handke's "First Man" (Kaspar) in his first full length play can be seen as an allusion to Adam before the Fall. Where originally the Tree of Knowledge brought a knowledge of good and evil, here Handke is framing "knowledge" as language itself, as a "fall" into perception, thought, and differentiation arising from its use. Kaspar's world and language are at the outset complete, whole and contiguous despite his lacking a public language to express himself. He lacks nothing because a differentiated "real" and "lack" do not exist for him; without the words to describe an

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[10] As a protagonist in an anti-mimetic theatre piece, Kaspar/Frankenstein is ideal. Our desire to identify with him is rejected by the terror of the void, the imaginary, he represents; conversely, we cannot "name" and obtain mastery over him because he is anti-signification, anti-symbolic. These characters are abject, in that they remind us of our pre-linguistic and helpless state as children. As Kristeva states, "The abject has only one quality of the object and that is being opposed to I" (1982:1). Yet we are drawn to the abject because we must acknowledge its presence on the stage. It is ultimately liminal: between presence and absence and existing as a friction between viewing subject and staged abject; it is a liminality we are compelled to watch, juxtaposing as it does the helplessness and pleasure of childhood. To identify fully with Kaspar would be to lose our language, our subjectivity; in the end we are left with an Other that is fearful because it is unknowable. Like Wittgenstein's concept of the "unspeakable" and Lyotard's lost "instruments of measurement", Kaspar slips past representation to be the perfect postmodern subject.

abstract desire, there is none. Kaspar's birth through the slit in the curtain marks his fall into the space of representation on the stage, a social, culturally constructed and linguistic space which is wholly unfamiliar to him. Likewise, we are presented with a character who is unfamiliar to us. We have to make the journey with him, participating in his explorations and attempts to create meaning. A phenomenological character in a play that foregrounds the limits of language, perception and representation, our attempts at identification will further highlight our own perceptions and experience.

Kaspar's makeup is "theatrical" and we eventually realize that he wears a half-mask of "astonishment and confusion" (63). His facial expression endears him to us as an audience, because we see ourselves as children in him. However, the expression is a mask, mediating our perception of him and his of us. Our desire to see the child and the infinite possibilities and freedom that he represents is simultaneously distantiated by the reminder that our perceptions are being constantly mediated. Upon viewing Kaspar, a critic noted that the outfit he wears was probably assembled at random from a theatrical wardrobe (Hern 60-1). Kaspar is a pastiche of possible characters and potentialities like a child, yet he is also seen as a theatrical *assemblage* that resists any single symbolic reading. Ultimately Kaspar frustrates our desire to create meaning.

As the character begins to move about the stage, his movements are "highly mechanical and artificial . . . his peculiar way of movement results from his constantly changing from one way of moving to another" (64). The body/mind of Kaspar is, in the terms of Jean Piaget, in the sensorimotor phase of childhood development. He attempts to explore his environment and create meaning using his body as the only means available to him is difficult because his body is a series of unnamed and untrained parts. The body

at his polymorphic phase exists as a discontinuous set of partial objects (Holland 46). Kaspar can neither name nor conceive of his parts as an integrated system as we see when he almost immediately crashes to the stage.

We want him to succeed in walking and exploring his environment so that he will be like us, so that we can see ourselves in him. We want to help him walk and explore because we know how much more mastery of the environment the mapped body affords us. His desire for the creation of meaning is coupled with ours; the more he becomes "like us" by exploring his environment the more we identify with him and the less abject he is. In this identification we too are forced to be re-aware of our own bodily integration and the ways in which we explore the environment.

As Kaspar sits helplessly on the stage, he begins to speak a sentence that is the only one he knows, but which obviously has no "meaning" for him. "I want to be a person like somebody else was once," he repeats over and over again (65)[11]. Lacking a sustained relational context with other words or people, Kaspar's fragile sentence attempts to encapsulate all the meaning in his environment; an impossible task. He keeps on stumbling, physically and linguistically. His sentence has a limited capacity to signify and given the diversity of his environment will likely break down soon.

Kaspar's "language," like his ability to move about the stage, is polymorphic and limited. Just as the parent desires the child to speak "mama" to recognize and signify, we want Kaspar's significations to correspond to the objects he encounters. We want to see a

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[9] Kaspar's use of his sentence suggests a private language, a concept taken up by Wittgensteinian denoting a language meaningful only to its utterer. The contextual limitations of private language are such that it is "as if one of my joints were in a splints, and I am not yet familiar with the possible movements, so I as it were, keep on stumbling" (Zettel 16). Which is precisely what Kaspar does.

like mind on stage to identify with. Like the parent teaching language to the child, our sympathies with Kaspar lie in our own desire to be mirrored ourselves. We want repetition with a difference—"be like me, but don't make the same mistakes I did". We cathex our desire for our own rebirth and regeneration of ourselves onto Kaspar and that desire is reflected back at us: "I want to be a person like someone else was once" (65).

Kaspar explores his environment using his sentence, speaking it to the set, at a chair, to the table and to a closet. The closet opens upon his kicking it, revealing "several colourful theatrical costumes" (66). To this sight Kaspar repeats again, "I want to be a person like somebody else was once." The sighting of the costumes and Kaspar's line opens up a field of theatrical possibilities. We want him to don a costume and become a fixed and readable sign, but Kaspar is oblivious to theatrical conventions so our expectations are deferred. We are also reminded of the artifice of the stage and the "normal" role of representation on the stage, to "be a person like someone else was once" by donning a costume.

The closet of costumes resists any singular signification throughout the play because it is about representation, it is about the game itself. As a series of costumes it marks the endless possible moves within the stage game; within it are words not yet written and plays not yet staged. As Kaspar's former home, its doors mark the transition between the Imaginary world within and the Symbolic stage space without. Further, it occupies the role of that which cannot be signified—Kaspar's experience in his prelinguistic state.[12]

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[12] The closet of costumes becomes a site of resistance, an affront to the urge for mastery through language, what Handke calls the "stupid speechification and resulting brutalization of people" (Joseph 61). Representation implies both mastery and abstraction, and consequently can be a dangerous technology for

The voices of the *Einsager* or Prompters speak to Kaspar for the first time, surrounding him and the audience. Handke recommends that their lines are prerecorded or delivered over an amplifying system. They are disembodied, mediated, and "speak a text that is not theirs" (66). The *Einsanger* are not personalities, but a principle; their voices literally engulf us, "no longer belonging to anyone but being directed at everyone" (Malkin 1990:366). Language literally is space for the *Einsager:* they inhabit the diagetic and mimetic spaces simultaneously, reflecting the internalized and social aspects of language. They are linguistic structures and meanings as an autonomous entity; like Orwell's Newspeak, they are a language that "constructs itself [and] thinks your thoughts for you" (162).

Kaspar will be the next victim of the *Einsager* but we, the audience are also victimized, by being surrounded and penetrated by their totalitarian language. The disruption of Kaspar's internal world by these disembodied voices parallels our own disruption of diagetic/mimetic boundaries—suddenly we too are being interpellated by the *Einsager.* Our desire to help Kaspar become "like us" through language is quickly turned back on the audience with the appearance of the totalitarian *Einsager*—a panoptic super-ego.

For the first part of the act the *Einsager* go about extracting Kaspar's private language, deconstructing the *Umwelt* (perceptual field) that his sentence provides him. The ability to rudimentally map his environment that Kaspar's private language affords

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the brutalization of human subjects as seen in Martial Law. Handke has said that this "speechification" and "brutalization" is "the only thing that preoccupies [him] as a writer" (Joseph 30). Living in a post-Holocault Europe, during a time of "black" civil rights, "women's" rights, and "youth" culture, the power of representation both to liberate and to repress was part of the fabric of 1960s European thought. The closet on Handke's stage encapsulates this dual nature of language as both pure potential and prison.

him is acknowledged by the *Einsager*. With it he can:

> Make all objects into a sentence with the sentence.
>
> You can make all objects into *your* sentence.
>
> With this sentence, all objects belong to you.
>
> With this sentence all objects are yours. (68)

For Kaspar everything is an amorphous sensory field undifferentiated by language. All objects are his because at this developmental phase his limited language had not yet developed into clear distinctions between subjective and objective experiences (see Piaget 1987). It is this "disordered" Choric[13] state that the *Einsager* wish to exorcise so that Kaspar can become normalized into the "community of sentences" (55).

The language/society of the Prompters demands adherence to the rules of the language game so that the classification and functioning of subjects and objects can be controlled. To the audience Kaspar appears as the child with whom we attempt to identify, to the *Einsager*/Super-Ego he is a monster that must be socialized, made "normal" and locked down into a controllable signifier. Our initial urge to "help" Kaspar is reflected back at us—we want to create someone "like we were once", but that is in itself a totalitarian desire. We are shown to already be in the grip of the *Einsager*.

Bombarded by the continuous commands of the *Einsager*, who urge him to "learn order", "become aware [and] learn with the sentence you are learning", Kaspar's sentence

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[13] Kristeva's notion of the Chora is as "a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their ephemeral states" that exists before language; it is an undifferentiated continuum of sensual impressions existing before the call into subjectivity and the symbolic (Kristeva 1984:25).

is initially able to resist their indoctrination. However, the *Einsager* finally hit upon pain, a private experience which can never be fully publicly signified to communicate to him:

> Because you don't know
> the name of anything, everything
> hurts you even if you don't know
> that it hurts you because you don't
> know what the word hurt means.
>
> *The first divergence:*
> I want to be like somebody else
> like somebody else once was
> somebody else (73)

The Prompters progress by making Kaspar aware of the fact that other minds and other sentences exist: "you are already looking for other sentences" (73). Just as we, the audience, wish to see another mind (on stage), Kaspar is forced by the *Einsager* to find "other sentences".

Like the torturers that they are, the *Einsager* make Kaspar aware of his pain, then offer him a way out: to look for other sentences. Still finding resistance, they then put Kaspar through the experience of the Lacanian mirror phase proper, mapping his body in space for him:

> Where are you sitting? You are
> sitting quietly. What are you

> speaking? You are speaking slowly.
> What are you breathing? You are
> breathing regularly. (73)

With this, Kaspar's sentence, the order of the Imaginary, is subsumed and becomes gibberish: "Olce ime kwas askwike lein" (74). With an order from the *Einsager* to "Open up!!!" (75), Kaspar is silenced and his sentence "exorcised." Kaspar's Imaginary worldview has been cracked open and evacuated to make room for the Symbolic order of the *Einsager*.

In this moment we are made aware of our own subjectivity, our own sitting and breathing. We are put though the same process of increased awareness as Kaspar is. With the command to "Open up!!!" and Kaspar's subsequent silence, we feel for the protagonist as he loses his Quixotic sentence, his individuality. The scene is horrifying (to us) because of our own desire to believe in a sovereign subjectivity that cannot be taken away. It also disturbs our desire to create meaning from/on Kaspar. Where we wanted to lock Kaspar down into objective signification, here the *Einsager* force him to "open up" to meaning. We wanted him to be a subject but not like this; the dissonance between these two poles of desire disturb and traumatize us at the same time as Kaspar is silenced.

Once emptied of his own language, the Prompters then begin to "*stuff him with enervating words*" (76), mediating his experience of the environment through language and transforming him into the split subject of public and private experience:

> The chair still hurts you, but the
> word chair already pleases you.
> The table still hurts you but the
> word table already pleases you. (77)

The *Einsager* mediate every object with language, and in doing so make Kaspar aware of its distinct existence. They replace every object that he previously encountered as unmediated experience with a distantiated representation. They then play each representation off against each other relationally, enmeshing him in the game of language. The chair, broom, closet and shoelaces are segmented into independent objects, rather than the amorphous sensorimotor field they once were. The Prompters give Kaspar a new language and a new subjectivity, but the price is alienation from the unmediated experience he once knew.

Finally, with his indoctrination into signification and his awareness of representation seemingly complete, Kaspar utters his first, tragic sentence:

> At that time, while I was still away
> my head never ached, as much, and
> I was not tortured the way I am
> now that I am here. (77)

Where previously Kaspar was unaware that his pain was distinct from anything else, he now knows it as a separate experience and it takes on a new, distinct intensity. Tortured

by speech, Kaspar is now tormented by the alienating subjectivity he possesses (Schleuter 28). The first means by which the *Einsanger* are able to connect with him, and the first sentence uttered by Kaspar, is of pain, something ultimately inexpressible through language.

The trope of the Fall continues with Kaspar's recounting his previous polymorphic state where objects were not differentiated: "I neither saw / anything nor heard anything, and/ I felt good" (78). He remarks that now everything is distinct he can name a specific physical pain, and perhaps forget it, "but the pain / doesn't stop at all ever any more ever / since I know that I can feel / ashamed of falling (78). The guilt of his Fall is not directly sexual, but the guilt of knowing one is embodied, watched and recognizing that the word/concept "ashamed" exists. His knowledge of language has expelled him from his "Eden" of blissful ignorance that was, at least, a real and unmediated experience before representation.

Kaspar's entry into language, his birth as an individual should be a momentous occasion. However here it is seen as a form of coercion, a painful and alienating experience. Handke represents the mediation of reality through language as a tragic loss of contact with actual perception or experience. By naming reality one loses a certain level of integrity—the experience of it—which is distantiated by representation. Furthermore, that fall into language also implies a fall into authoritarian control exerted by language and those who control it.

We are traumatized as Kaspar speaks his first "real" words. Our expectation of the birth of individuality as being "liberating" quickly turns back on itself and is seen as oppressive and alienating. Likewise our desire to re-live a mythologized bourgeois

childhood through Kaspar—a repetition with a difference—is smashed. The trauma of this loss makes us feel for Kaspar even more, as we realize he exists on the stage not as an icon of wish-fulfillment but rather as a subject as alienated as ourselves. Handke's subversion of the comforting bourgeois plot of childhood development removes the safety of knowing what comes next and we share Kaspar's uncertainty as he utters his fateful first words.

The self-consciousness, shame and guilt that subjectivity produces is evident later when Kaspar repeats to himself "Do remember that and don't forget it!" (79), like a strict totalitarian parent. Meanwhile the *Einsager* extol the virtues of being "normal", having "normal objects" and "normal sentences" (79). Now having the degree of private subjectivity to express his emotions and feel guilt, the *Einsager* attempt to mold Kaspar into a public persona. Kaspar, the split-subject of the mirror phase begins to see himself as the mirror image—as an Object in the gaze of the Other. Kaspar's subjectivity is further alienated, mediated and controlled with his recognition that he has been made into an object by others' signification of him.

Our identification with Kaspar up until this point has been one of sympathy, but now we recoil with his "Do that and don't forget it" (79). As his internalization of the *Einsager*'s discourse increases, the more we are pushed away from identification with the protagonist. As we have watched the effects of and been interpolated into the *Einsager*'s discourse, we shift our focus from Kaspar to the situation itself. The more alienated from reality Kaspar becomes, the more we are subject to a kind of *Verfremdungseffekt* and forced to analyze our own subject positions and critique the sayings of the Prompters.

Analyzing our own subjectivities in retrospect and Kaspar's in development, we

are drawn into the dictates of the *Einsager* to see how they relate to us, and how Kaspar will deal with them. If the subject is, as post-structuralism holds, primarily composed of a series of conscious and subconscious signifying chains, then the *Einsager's* next exaltation is truly terrifying:

> You
> yourself are normal once you need
> to tell no more stories about
> yourself: you are normal once your
> story is no longer distinguishable
> from any other story: when no
> thesis about you provokes an
> anti-thesis. (80)

For the *Einsager*, the only good subject is a dialectically dead and conforming subject.[14]

Kaspar's ability to name objects and his autonomous subjectivity--Piaget's Preoperational phase of development--has always already become mediated by the terms he uses to express himself and the structures which govern them. Kaspar's "advance" up the developmental ladder has already "sentenced" him to the prison-house of language.

Thus sentenced, the *Einsager* valorize the self-contained and conformist subject,

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[14] We should read the above quotation with a certain dread, considering recent claims of an "end of history" due to the "triumph" of global capitalism (Fukuyama 3). The order proposed by the *Einsager* is the same proposed by those who proclaim the end of dialectical of history supposedly proven by the fall of communism.

and wish to cut Kaspar off from any possibility of free utterance. They have "opened up" Kaspar to subjecthood, but now wish to confine him within that very linguistic subjectivity. The *Einsanger* (and arguably the proponents of post-industrial capitalism) wish to create a subject that is devoid of intertextual communication, devoid of intersubjective experience—in short—an automaton.

Continuing their attempts to confine Kaspar's subjectivity and use of language, the *Einsager* attempt to circumscribe knowledge by conforming his language to first order (object-picture) relationships.[15] They wish to constrain his becoming into being by keeping everything—especially Kaspar—as an alienated object for their use and manipulation. "For a normal object a the word for / the object suffices. Stories only begin with abnormal objects," the Prompters remark, trying to confine objects from the context in which they exist (80). An object is "normal" when you "don't first have to tell / a story about it" (79). Detaching the object from its context in the language game, the *Einsager* attempt to conflate the real and the sign into one to one relationships.

As the *Einsager* extoll the values of reducing objects to signs, the spotlight shines on Kaspar's hands while he bends to tie his shoelaces in a "noose", the Prompters remark: "What is / worth striving for is a curtain / that is just falling" (80) just as Kaspar manages to tie his shoelaces. The stage directions remark: "*The first order has been created*" (80). He learns to tie his shoelaces through the order of language and the pictures it represents, but that also locks out any other possible way of doing so. Kaspar's sense of "becoming" is quickly limited in conformity with the dictates of "being" inherent in language. Order

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[15] This is Handke's indictment of the Picture Theory of language following Wittgenstein's later arguments, which refute that language functions only by denoting single mental signifieds to linguistic signifiers, devoid of an operational context (PI.I.7).

is created, but that order is a noose. The same danger of conformity applies, Handke seems to be insinuating, to the theatre as well. Kaspar tying his shoelace in a "noose" juxtaposed with the line "curtain falling" creates a sense of foreboding by alluding to the end of a play. Ending and death are evoked as Kaspar trades becoming for being. As a theatrical trope, we recognize the reference to Aristotelian plot structure and its perpetually ending with the "curtain falling," locking out any other possibilities. The fierce adherence of the traditional theatre to Aristotelian mimesis is also a noose which constricts and constrains its own becoming, a convention Handke is trying to break. If theatre continues down the same path as Kaspar's ceaseless creation of order, we recognize that it too may be a "curtain falling."

We see the order of language that Kaspar is learning rapidly assimilated into the reality of his costume and the stage picture itself. Kaspar redresses himself, making sure his belt goes through all the loops. With the *Einsager's* words "*timed to coincide with the loops through which Kaspar is passing the belt*" they instruct him that anything that provokes questions is "disorderly, unpretty, / uncomfortable, irksome, ruthless, / irresponsible, in bad taste" (81). The effect of viewing this simultaneity on the stage cements sign and picture in the mind of Kaspar and the audience. The arbitrariness of language is eschewed by the *Einsager* in order to ingrain fixed correspondence between the signifier and signified. As Kaspar attempts to button his jacket properly, they inform him that "Every object must be the / picture of an object"; such things are "proper". With the words again "*timed to coincide*" they note that a proper table is "orderly, pretty / comfortable, peaceful, / inconspicuous, useful, in good taste" (81). We watch Kaspar's movements become more mechanical, more syncopated with the voices of the *Einsager.*

The simultaneity of voice and action foreground our recognition that the protagonist with whom we identify is slowly becoming an automaton, trained in the expectations of society.

After Kaspar's first attempt at buttoning fails, he tries again, with the *Einsager* noting that each house "that tumbles, / trembles, smells, burns, is vacant, is / haunted is not a true house" to the beat of each button clasped, with the implication that without being properly dressed Kaspar cannot be a "true" social subject (81). In addition to the previous awareness of shame introduced by the *Einsager*, Kaspar now realizes that his attire is also subject to judgements by the social gaze. It is a gaze we are implicated in because if we believe that Kaspar looks "better" in his attire, we have fallen into the trap set by the *Einsager*. Our desire to view is complicated by a corresponding desire to judge and qualify, wishing for order on the stage foregrounds our own desire to stop at the simple meaning that would be just a "curtain falling".

The conformity of language spreads to define the stage space; we watch as Kaspar "*puts the stage in order*" by creating "*(three) walls for himself*" (82-3). Now Handke uses Kaspar to create the box set realistic stage space we "expect to see". Where before, all placements of objects were initially entirely arbitrary, now they are made to resemble a picture. Handke's critique of Aristotelian mimesis continues: the fixed and limiting forms of thought espoused by the *Einsager* are the spatial equivalent of stage Realism. If we see this as being a "true house" on stage, then we too are prisoners of language.

As Kaspar arranges the Naturalist properties and furnishings , the *Einsager* list off bourgeois platitudes such as "Work develops an awareness of / duty in everyone" and "All suffering is natural" (83). The platitudes of the *Einsager* function in much the same

way as the desire to conform to the Naturalist stage picture. The statements are vacuous, middle class moralisms so abstract and general that they are essentially meaningless. However, we are meant to interpellate ourselves into them and this is exactly what Kaspar does as he rearranges the stage (and himself) into bland *Bürger*-dom. The empty platitudes are designed to construct a stage picture that contains its subject, further confining Kaspar and creating a space which reinforces his expectations and thoughts. Here Handke is slyly insulting his audience in a less direct way than *Offending the Audience* as the bourgeois belief system is exposed as a farce through the nonsensical string of platitudes. The system of coercion is exposed as we hear familiar phrases that we (hopefully) now reject.

The only item we see on the stage that will not conform to Kaspar's redecorating is the closet of costumes upstage. After attempting several times to shut it, he remarks that everything that "doesn't close": "frightens me", "hits me in the face" and "bites me" is just a closet (85-86). The closet as the abject resists singular signification (and therefore order); in the end Kaspar must leave it open. Where once we identified with and encouraged by Kaspar's development, we now see the abjection of the closet as our best hope for subversion of a totalitarian order. The more organized the stage space becomes, the more we want the disorder of the closet to disrupt it. The closet, an intersection between the semiotic and symbolic registers, disrupts our focus. We are drawn to the novelty it represents onstage as well as its ability to escape the order of the *Einsager*. As a representation of Kaspar's past, the possibility of resistance and of becoming (the costumes), closet becomes a silent character and repository of our abject desire; we want the old Kaspar back.

The order of the furniture is dictated by a spotlight, which moves to show Kaspar where on the picture-object stage everything "belongs". It designates places for the sofa (now fully onstage), the chairs, the rocking chair and table. The spotlight begins to designate a place for the broom and shovel (which are inscribed with the name of the theatre), then moves offstage to where they "belong". Kaspar then brings on a vase, decorative fruit and a small stool as the *Einsager* remark that "A room / should be / like a picture book", like the dictates of Naturalism (86)[16]. The more realistic Kaspar's environment becomes, the more unreal he himself seems to us. Kaspar stands in the center of his newly ordered space looking like "*a dummy at an interior-decoration exhibition*" (86). The order he has created now mirrors his linguistic structures, which in turn mirror the *Einsager*'s. Our identification with him is lost as he loses his subjectivity to become another object in the stage picture/mirror. We are distantiated from the protagonist and forced to concentrate on *how* this loss of subjectivity came about and how far we have become interpellated into a comparable simulation.

Handke painstakingly makes the stage picture conform to language in order to advance his philosophical arguments laid out in the *Kaspar's Sixteen Phrases* in the preamble to the play (55). Just as Kaspar meticulously explores and reconfigures his environment, Handke is carefully advancing his philosophical arguments and exploring their boundaries.

The *Einsager* tell him that "You are / what you have" and "The order / of the

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[16]Handke illustrates Wittgenstein's claim that "A *picture* held us captive. And we could not get inside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably (PI 115). Signification becomes the primary reality and the "real" is seen in relation to it, instead of the reverse; our language reinforces the structures we see around us.

objects / creates / all / prerequisites / for / happiness" (87). The lines themselves are delivered with a staccato phasing and distinctively placed order which reinforces Kaspar's alienation. The substitution of representation for the real which has been the crux of Kaspar's indoctrination into subjectivity up until this point now shows signs of a Marxist alienation. His alienation from the wholeness he knew before language and his desire to no longer be afraid is quickly transformed into object fetishism. Kaspar has become trapped in a simulacrum, a system of abstract relations, and become an object. The *Einsager* use their "model sentences" to cause Kaspar to create a "model" environment that will in turn *create him*. Trapped in language, Kaspar is also trapped in an environment that will order his thoughts and behaviours. He is in a feedback loop with his linguistic and spatial environment from which there may be no escape. The unreality we see on the stage, rather than being "pretty as a picture" is seen as repressive and threatening[17].

The final scene of Kaspar's redecorating ends with the stage "festively lit" and with the *Einsanger's* ominous and protestant-capitalist phrase, "you're not in the world for fun" (88). We watch as Kaspar uses (and abuses) logic in a vain attempt to explain his

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[17] Wittgenstein argues in the *Tractatus* that all language that is taught is "second language," a societal construct that imposes meaning on the world for its speaker. The superstructure of language will already be suffused with the power structures of the social / material basis of the society. Kaspar's use of second language, and the spatialization it produces on the stage is already a false consciousness, marked by Kaspar's increasingly *Bürger*-esque statements and simulated stage "house". Handké himself has drawn a similar comparison: "People who are alienated from their language and from speaking, like workers from their products, are alienated from the world" (Hays 358). The separation between the linguistic and the material, with their structuring and alienation of consciousness, are not in the least bit mutually exclusive. Each supports and reinforces the other. The language the *Einsager* instruct Kaspar to use is already imbedded with material relations, class and power structures. Kaspar uses this language, imbedded with ideology, to reorganize a space/base along these lines, creating an environment which will in turn tend to reinforce the superstructure. With Kaspar's "Fall" into language, the material is always already restructured and the feedback loop between them begins.

existence. He has reached the ability to abstract and question--Piaget's developmental phase of concrete operations—but his logic is comically false. As the levels of representation pile up, Kaspar's alienation from any real lived experience and his mediation of all perception become total. His abstract musings become further distanced from reality.[18]

In an attempt to explain his own existence, Kaspar begins with the phrase "Everything that is bright is peaceful" and ends up concluding "everything that makes me good makes me good makes me good for something" (88-9). The real answer to his question is simultaneously reflected by the stage space as a gradual darkening of the lights leaving Kaspar uttering his shrill speech in total darkness. An existential answer to an existential question, Kaspar ignores the consequences of "nothingness" and quickly reverts to the delusional order of the *Einsager*: "Everything that is in order is / in order because I say to myself / that it is in order" (89). Kaspar continues his logic, as the lights become blindingly bright and his voice becomes increasingly shrill, ending with: "everything that I say to myself is in / order" (90). He has constructed a circular argument that reassures him but denies an existential reality; instead he takes solace in the delusional simulations of language and the bright light of the *Einsager*'s order. The abject darkness which might have allowed him to escape representation is, at least at this point, seen as too threatening to be a means of liberation. As Kaspar muses with his newfound logic, the *Einsager* speak lines like "Beaten to a pulp" and "Struck between the

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[18] The scene recalls Handke's *Calling for Help*, where one word calls for the next, a particular language game based on signifying chains (Näglele 332). Here however, the signifying chains take the form of "logical deductions" that are stretched into meaninglessness. Like the moral maxims spouted earlier, here Handke shows us the hazards of combining abstract signification with abstract logic, resulting in false conclusions (and false consciousness).

eyes" (89), giving voice to the terror and threat to the ego of non-existence. To avoid further brutalization, Kaspar foregoes the chance at freedom and responsibility and chooses inauthentic existence, mediated by representation.[19]

The levels of abstraction begin to become more intense and the threat of violence increases as Kaspar learns the functions of metaphor.[20] The danger abstract metaphorical thinking poses is juxtaposed with its nationalistic usage. We are horrified as Kaspar's language becomes regimented, dark and foreboding as the child we once saw on stage has become part of militaristic language regime, a monster:

> The dog barks. The commander
> barks
>
> The water is rising. The fever is
> rising. If the water couldn't rise,
> the fever couldn't rise.
>
> The avalanche roars. The angry
> man roars.
>
> The angry man thunders. Thunder

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[19] Handke's "speechification" and "brutalization" of people is here seen to have existential foundations. Not only does speech turn the *être-pour-soi* into an objectified *être-en-soi*, but the various Prompters of society do so for very particular reason: to wipe from memory the abject "nothingness" that the authentic existential subject is a reminder of. Violence always carries with it a double intent: firstly to suppress the *être-pour-soi* physically as a threat to its own power, and secondly to psychically suppress the abject "nothingness" and possibilities of freedom/responsibility the *être-pour-soi* represents (Lacey 103). There is also the implication in Handke's text that to choose authenticity in a delusional society might result in very real, physical violence.

[20] This is a major issue of Handke, particularly when one considers the Vienna and Graz Groups' aim of bringing about "the resuscitation of a language left breathless by its blatant propagandistic misuse" by those who used metaphor and symbolism for nationalistic purposes (Schlueter 7).

Thunders. Without the angry man,
thunder couldn't thunder.

The flags flutter. The eyelids
flutter.

The balloon swells. The jubilation
swells. Without the balloon,
the jubilation couldn't swell. (95)

The overall impression of the images for us is one of a political rally, the scene echoes Nuremberg. Metaphorical language and imagery become the means of spreading propaganda.[21] First the *Einsager* limit the meaning of words by advocating picture-object relationships, now they expand it by employing metaphor as propaganda, trapping Kaspar in an unreal series of associations.

After indoctrinating Kaspar into metaphor, the *Einsager* and Kaspar remark in unison: "...it is / true that there exist other / possibilities of the representation / of the condition" (96). The claim is disproven as we see how brainwashed and conforming Kaspar has become. We are shocked to see Kaspar mirror the discourse of the *Einsager*; as he becomes one of them. Now he is a threatening force aligned with the panoptic voices that surround us in the theatre. His once disorganized body has been replaced by

[21] Handke considers metaphor to be perhaps the most nefarious of literary devices, since it causes a "mania for comparisons" and exacerbates our inability to "differentiate individual entities", which is the goal of any authoritarian and ethnocentric program. Handke uses Wittgenstien's assertion that we can never approach reality until we "rid ourselves of the implications of our symbolism"; he attacks metaphor as the most abstract form of representation and therefore also the most dangerous (Collett 72).

one that is militarized, regimented and controlled. It has all been achieved through language, and he is—in the eyes of the *Einsager*—the perfect subject. They test his brainwashing and interpolation into their language by interrogating him:

you

disquiet yourself:

I am quieting myself.

You were already making a fist.

I was still screaming.

You still took a deep breath.

I was already there. (97)

The *Einsager* test Kaspar to see if he has internalized their discourse and become a mirror of them. With their final question of "you," Kaspar replies "recognized me", inferring that he has fully internalized the language, thought structures and totalitarian gaze of the *Einsager*. He is no longer an autonomous subject, but a mirror image of the Prompters. The *Einsager* tell Kaspar to "think what you are saying", noting that he cannot think outside of the language they have taught him. Kaspar reaches Piaget's final developmental stage: that of formal operations, where one thinks about thinking and is fully conscious of one's own self-aware subjectivity. Where Piaget hoped this to be the phase which liberates the subject, here that subjectivity becomes total entrapment. Kaspar says three times, almost as an invocation, "I am the one I am" (102).[22]

[22] The phase or variations on it appear in both the Bible as the name of God spoken to Moses (Exodus 3:13)

Having led us through the creation of the subject and its subjugation Handke has taken us to the point of the bourgeois subject under the totalitarian state. Kaspar exists in a society where "freedom to choose an ideology . . . everywhere proves to be freedom to choose what is always the same" (Horkheimer & Adorno 166-7). The negative dialectic shown by the collapse of Enlightenment reason the horrors of Auschwitz has just been played out on the stage for us. The call into representation at first appears to be the construction of order out of chaos, but is soon seen to be the totalitarian monopolization and control of the subject—mirrored by the aesthetic ideology of stage realism—which limits and represses in the name of power.

The call into representation presumed to be a unique and liberating experience is shown to be ultimately repressively conformist. We have gone on the ride with great fascination because "reality" is so compelling and of course we have been watching it get made. We have had a privileged part to play but are also implicated in the process of subjugation. Having illustrated this process Handke will now take us somewhere quite different in bringing the postmodern schizoid subject to life.

Kaspar, having proclaimed his individuality with "I am the one I am" suddenly stops rocking in the chair and exclaims, "Why are there so many black / worms flying about?"--a slightly modified line from Horvath's *Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung*-- a sign of profound irrationality.[23] We are shocked and surprised by this statement as hope and fear

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and in Descartes' *Meditation IV*. If we read *Kaspar* as a variation on the Fall, then the self-awareness that Handke's protagonist attains is a somewhat "divine" ability, even if that ability traps him in his own linguistic creation. If we read it in terms of Descartes "Cogito Ergo Sum", in the moment that Kaspar is aware of himself as a thinking being he has attained true consciousness, but is always already trapped in the subject-object dualisms of language.

[23]Critics Manfred Mixner and Peter Pütz see the phrase as being a sign that there is still a reserve of meaning left from Kaspar's pre-linguistic status, and while it is not rebellion in itself, it signals at least a secret desire to return to his state before "adjustment" (Linstead 58).

exist for us simultaneously; we do not know whether this is a break in his indoctrinating process or a decent into madness. Kaspar contains the double nature of abjection in this moment, revealing our hope for the disruption of the existing order and our fear of powerlessness should he be truly mad.

We can no longer pretend to be inside realistic representation at this point, the *Einsager* take Kaspar to a place which develops his totalized subjectivity and the *mise-en-scene* starts deconstructing itself. The break in Kaspar's subjectivity previously causes them to redouble their efforts to contain him. They instruct Kaspar that if he "sees" an object differently than he speaks of it, he must be mistaken. If he doesn't want to say that he is mistaken, "it is / obvious that you want to be / *forced* and thus do want to say it / in the end" (102). Kaspar's emergent self-consciousness is turned into a paradox he cannot break out of. The order he is supposed to want is a false order, but any protestation is an admission of wanting to be forced to believe that it is not false. It is a paradox that forces Kaspar to "be nice and quiet"—the schizoid condition—as he cannot win. Our expectations are suspended as we wait to see the result of this total confinement of language and thought. Finally, the result is a kind of schizophrenia; he is "cracked open" (103).

We have already seen the *Einsanger* putting Kaspar through the mirror phase by mapping his body in time and space earlier in the play. Now with being "cracked open", Kaspar's subjectivity enters an entirely different phase, a fractured consciousness where he constantly views himself as a distantiated object. He watches himself sweeping the stage, sees two of himself walk across the stage in unison, bumping into each other and

watches himself sitting in a chair.[24] This "second mirror phase" has the effect of a *mis-en-abyme* in Kaspar's consciousness; first alienated from reality by language, he is now alienated even from himself as a subject and fractures into a series of social constructs.

The result is a paralytic schizoid state. This is the end goal of the authoritarian and totalizing discourses of the *Einsager* and those like them: to create the docile body with its own internalized panopticon. The schizoid mind is entirely divorced from the body and emotion. The semiotic order is entirely extinguished or ignored to become an automaton of the symbolic, devoid of emotion and subversion. Representation reflected infinitely so distantiates the subject from reality that any relation to physicality and *jouissance* is extinguished. Kaspar has become the schizoid subject, the goal of his subject formation by the *Einsager*.

Not surprisingly, once Kaspar becomes schizoid by "seeing himself being seen" and totally internalizing the discourse of the *Einsanger*, the Prompters fall silent, as they are no longer necessary for Kaspar's "training". In scene L, Kaspar stands between the closet and the table, the semiotic and symbolic social space, and forces open his fist with his other hand (108). Finally succeeding, we see that his fist is empty; his resistance to the *Einsanger* has, at least temporarily, vanished. His previous semiotic state appears to be contained as he finally manages to shut the closet door.

Kaspar gives his "model citizen" speech, which takes the form of a disavowal of his previous state of being. The speech, however, constantly subverts itself, and is punctuated by the stage direction of *"The closet stays shut"* (111). As he walks further

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[24] It is what Alice Kuzniar describes as Handke's use of *Antwortblick*, or "seeing oneself being seen" (Barbe- Hammer 9) and splits consciousness even further. Here, the mirror of the *Einsager* has become an object even in his own gaze; the endless reflections are representations of oneself proliferating into infinity.

and further downstage while speaking, the closet takes on an ominous character to it, as if its subconscious and Choric contents might spill out any second. The tension between the conscious order of the model citizen and the repressed contents of the subconscious is spacialized on the stage.

While Kaspar extolls that he is "industrious" and "everyone likes me" the concept of linguistic surveillance reappears with "anyone can produce the desired information about me" and "I am ready to be interrogated." The threat of violence is also omnipresent as "I am well" is juxtaposed with "I am ready to die," and "I am no public menace" with "If worst comes to worst, I can always hide under the furniture" (110). He finally says that he wants, like a good schizoid subject, "to be / quiet" and attempts to leave the stage. He returns three times as if to say something further, again putting his allegiance to the *Einsager* into doubt. As he leaves, the closet doors swing open and it is intermission.

The spoken intermission text is piped into the auditorium, into the lobby and even outside, in order to subject us to "speech torture". Bombarded from all sides by such phrases as "Everything that you serve yourself is handed from the left. [. . .] The grip that chokes comes from both sides" (116). We are not allowed a moment away from language constructing the subject, relentlessly reminded that it occurs all the time. To a cacophany of buzz saw blades and sirens, the soundscape works against the audience collectively creating meaning in between the "acts" of the play by continually flooding them with nonsense phases and the threat of violence. The invasiveness of language in the social space of the lobby keeps us in a state of agitation; it intentionally provokes us as much as speech of the *Einsager* did.

The dialectic of diagetic and mimetic stage space is broken; wherever language goes, so goes representation. We are confined, like Kaspar, in the grip of language, its verbal violence constantly threatening our own subjectivity. The lobby, which should be a respite from the speech torture we have seen becomes another space of threatening language and immanent brutality. The effect of this cacophonous text on us is the fracturing of our own perceptions and the breaking up of coherent meaning; the same effect the *Einsager* have had on Kaspar. The violence of the language reflects the brutality of World War II and the inability to believe in absolute meaning thereafter. Our confusion and disorientation listening to this text reflects a post-Nazi Europe where truth claims and meaning are placed in doubt and the belief in Enlightenment ideals has been utterly shattered. Our uncertainty is the uncertainty of having no foundation upon which to base meaning, the schizophrenic arbitrariness of postmodernism.

As the audience re-enters the stage space we see that Kaspar's psychosis has progressed to the point where he now has become multiple personas: there are two Kaspars seated on the couch wearing masks that express contentment. Kaspar has conformed to the dictates of the *Einsager* and of society, but now finds himself interchangeable with any other Kaspar, expendable, alienated and fragmented. His story is now interchangeable with any other; conformity has reduced him to an alienated multiplicity of objects.

The multiple Kaspars on the stage provoke an uneasy laughter from us. Having to watch multiple Kaspars on the stage fractures our focus and consciousness like the protagonist. Seeing multiplicity on the stage alienates us, but there is also an element of terror. The existence as duplicates of a supposedly unique subject smashes the bourgeois

notion of individuality. In the end the Enlightenment ended up producing standardized "sameness" and conformity rather than individuality, a notion we are confronted with in these duplicates on stage (Adorno & Horkheimer 121). Our uniqueness, as well as the Realism that attempts to reinforce it, is shown to be a sham.

As the *Einsager* give a verbal description of the similarities between beating a person and beating a rug, four more Kaspars file in and sit on the couch. The gist of the *Einsager*'s speech is that order must predominate and the "socially sick" deserve to be beaten to "re-educate" them to order. They conclude with "thus calm reigns on earth" (120). As the original Kaspar takes the stage and begins speaking, "*His voice begins to resemble that of the prompters*" (121). Kaspar has become a prompter himself, perpetuating the order inflicted on him. His speech takes on a rhyming quality as he recounts his previous state of being as a sort of grotesque McCarthian confessional. His previous experiences, from his polymorphic state to his destruction of the furniture to his learning to "drive / a wedge / between me / and the objects" are rendered into language. Language is now the dominant reality, and experience secondary.

The speech gradually transforms into a sermon on what "Everyone" must do, including "wash his hands before eating" and emptying "his pockets before a beating". Conversely, no one may "scribble on toilet walls" or "mention murders at dinner" (128). As Kaspar "*sings like a true believer*" the other five Kaspars heckle, grunt, bump, and groan throughout. They begin to file their nails loudly as Kaspar remarks that everyone must "kill every paradox" and toss "everything unessential / down the drain" (131)[25].

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[25] The nail files that disrupt the speech can be read as the file that helps one escape the prison house of language. Alternately, they may be a play on Occam's Razor, whereby "everything unessential" goes "down the drain".

The Kaspars disrupt this speech, and their Choric disruption is the best hope of subverting the mindless subservience to the *Einsager* and spoken discourse. Handke is careful to avoid "realistic dissidence" that would further serve to reinforce the power of the *Einsager* and the culture of representation, keeping the subversion in constant flux (Adorno & Horkheimer 132). The gestic, comedic and non-verbal grunts and groans of the multiple Kaspars are languages that work in opposition to the thought-controlling language of The Prompters and we quickly identify with their struggle against a repressive force. Their absurd and grotesque gestures subvert meaning at every turn, slowly filing away the simulated reality of representation by making us laugh. We do not laugh "at" anything—it has no single object—but rather at the absurd situation presented to us. Laughter destroys representation by having no object; it comes about and proliferates because of context, the very thing the *Einsager* have tried to destroy all along.

Kaspar is finally jolted out of his speech:

> What was it
>
> that
>
> I said
>
> just now?
>
> If only I knew
>
> what it was
>
> that I said
>
> just now! (131)

Suddenly jolted to an awareness that he has been controlled by language, Kaspar cannot

recall the thoughts he has just expressed. The two are, following Wittgenstein, inseparable.[26] The language has so overtaken him that he does not even know what he has said. The schizoid subject, evacuated totally, exists as an alienated body for production/reproduction and a mind that serves only as a means for replicating discourse. Kaspar realizes that the language has been thinking his thoughts for him, and the result is confusion, desperation and laughter. He finally remarks to us three times: "Every sentence / is for the birds" (132). Like his invocation of subjectivity previously ("I am the one I am" (102)), he attempts to undo his linguistic construction.

Kaspar joins in the semiotic freeplay of his other selves by laughing and giggling. He recalls his entire process of indoctrination up until this point, analyzing how it worked to create his own subjectivity. Finally he concludes that "Already with my first sentence / I was trapped" in the prison-house of language. The words have distantiated reality, the sentences have structured his actions, space and thought, and his consciousness of abstract meanings has made him an object among other objects. He has been "converted to reality" and he finds it a nauseating experience. Like Hamlet's "too too solid flesh", Kaspar's over-awareness of his own subjectivity and the linguistic structures that confine his thoughts traumatize and horrify him, and us.

The *Einsager*'s last line in the play is repeated over and over: "If only, If only, If only . . ." (138). The irreversible fall into language becomes trauma and eternal return a purgatory of "if only". Like the destruction of Lyotard's "instruments of measurement"

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[26] As Orwell warned in his "Politics and the English Language," language can "construct your sentences for you – even think your thoughts for you to a certain extent – and at need they will perform the important service of partially concealing your meaning even from yourself" (Orwell 162), which is exactly what has happened to Kaspar.

and the end of the Enlightenment, the trauma of Kaspar's indoctrination puts all meaning into question (Lyotard 56). The production of meaning, the ultimate goal of subjectivity, is seen to be impossible with the public language of the *Einsager*. Kaspar's subjectivity and the meaning of the stage space are quickly deconstructed: the multiple Kaspars begin to make fun of the objects on stage, making them "*COMPLETELY IMPOSSIBLE*" (139).

In the end, he can "hear the logs comfortably crackling in the fire, with which I want to say that I do not hear the bones crackling comfortably". Kaspar "put up no undue resistance" to his torture and that of others (139). He realizes that he has been played for a fool, and turned "topsy turvy" by representation. He will not "get away with / just a fright"; he realizes he has been created, manipulated and trapped just as we have been by the totalizing Enlightenment notions of reason, individuality and free will. Like Othello before him he exasperatedly cries out: "Goats and monkeys / Goats and monkeys / Goats and monkeys / Goats and monkeys / Goats and monkeys" (140). Language does not necessarily lead to truth, but it is a game that can lead to torture and manipulation of others and ourselves. Revolted by the idiocy of language and its inability to express real meaning, Kaspar sees language as the verbal equivalent of the gibbering of "goats and monkeys". Language breeds endlessly, proliferating itself and its subjects, but never providing real meaning.

Fixed subjectivity, language and the mise-en-scene all collapse into a cacophony of unintelligible signs, as meaning multiplies endlessly to collapse in on itself. Our laughter is an uncomfortable laughter: the multiple Kaspars foreground the reproducible uniformity of the subject instead of its uniqueness, the collapse of meaning on the stage reflects our dread of a world beyond essential “truths” and the line “Goats and monkeys”

confronts us with the animal nature of humanity, rather than the quasi-divine "Man" of Humanism. Laughter is a means of subversion on the stage, but we must realize that behind this laughter lies a confrontation with a post-Enlightenment inheritance that we would much rather defer.

With Kaspar's final line the curtain becomes "only a curtain falling," slamming into all the Kaspars as they fall backstage. Handke's subject has gone from a pre-linguistic child, through the mirror stage and the stages of Piagetian development to reach his own subjectivity through language. At a certain point the propagation of language and subjectivity creates its own autocritique; its prolific ability to reproduce reality degenerates into abstract absurdity. The reverse process of subjectivity sets in, subject becomes object, a mere replicator of discourse and docile schizoid body. Beyond language is nonsense, the unspeakable, but it is that unspeakable laughter that holds the most hope for a reversal of the controlling power of discourse.

Kaspar becomes a kind of rebellious Caliban who strikes out against the order of the *Einsager* and language in general. The Choric/semiotic heteroglossia of Kaspars at the end shows that a new order of subjectivity may be possible, based on entirely new forms of (non)signification. Kaspar's ability to rebel at all in his situation is a hopeful statement of human becoming; in the end he seems to reopen the doors of the closet / language game to allow for further self-making, even if the curtain is, for now, a curtain falling.

At key points in the play Handke notes the changes in the structures, abstractions and situations that autoproduce the subject. The experience of Kaspar himself, the language of the *Einsager*, the space in which Kaspar exists and his intertextuality mark

the things that are created / create us through language. While here they are used to construct and manipulate the subject, the potential for their use to subvert is also apparent. The slippage that occurs between subjects, their surroundings and representation can be readily leveraged for purposes of subversion as well as control. The dialectic of the Enlightenment, and its entrapment of the subject in representation requires new forms to deal with an era that is beyond fixed meanings. Where Handke's play and notions of a new subject ends, the theatre of Heiner Müller begins. The dialectic of the Enlightenment is a foregone conclusion and the necessity for new forms is readily apparent in order to deal with the world of postmodernity. What is necessary for Müller is the creation of a new aesthetic, different connective patterns, and an innovative language that has the possibility of creating a new kind of subjectivity.

Chapter 3

Anti-Oedipus: Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine*

Most critics still consider Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine* as perhaps the author's most challenging and provocative work (Teraoka 87). It is also his best known and most frequently produced piece, perhaps owing to the openness to interpretation demanded by the text. The play was originally produced in Brussels in 1978 and West Germany in 1979 because the East German authorities had effectively banned its production. Notable productions since then have included a stylized, multi-perspectival version by Robert Wilson in New York (1986), a Quebecois version by Carbon 14 in Montreal (1987) and a meditation on the "triumph" of Capitalism by Müller himself in Berlin in 1990 (Fischlin 208). Each version is drastically different aesthetically, but has the nine-page text at its core.

Possibly the other reason why the play is so popular is because it was one of the first to exemplify the new aesthetics of postmodernism, and it anticipates the emergent social/political conditions of 21st century Europe. In an interview, Frederic Jameson contends that art and political consciousness emerge in periods of historical transition, when new means of production and social conditions are being set in place (Zhang 364). This certainly seems to be the case with Müller's work. The play's West German debut corresponded with the year of publication of Lyotard's *Postmodern Condition* (1979). Müller's final production of his play in 1990 was referred to as a "state funeral" since work on the production began mere weeks before the fall of the Berlin Wall in November

1990 and ended after Czechoslovakia's "Velvet Revolution" in March 1990 (Brenner 160). *Hamletmachine*, a play on the role of the impotent intellectual trying to mediate between various historical epochs and the revolutions which shatter them, was itself written in a historical moment which coincides with the emergence of economic Globalism and postmodern aesthetics.

Müller described the play as a "self-critique of the intellectual's position" in regard to revolutionary praxis (Calandra 128) that is an admixture of "material": text from Marx combines with quotes from Andy Warhol and Susan Atkins of the Manson Family. Characters drawn from Müller's historical arsenal include Hamlet, the actor playing Hamlet, Macbeth, a Hungarian revolutionary, Ophelia, Electra, Rosa Luxemburg, Ulrike Meinhof and others. Time and place change with ceaseless fluidity as the play represents revolutions past, present and future. This fluidity and complexity is in many ways daunting for an audience. Speaking about the confusion an audience might experience upon seeing one of his plays, Müller remarked: "Isn't it a problem of the audience that refuses to accept that the theatre has a reality of its own and doesn't portray, mirror, or copy the reality of the audience? . . . Naturalism nearly killed the theatre with this strategy of doubling [reality]" (Weber 1984:19). The remark might well have come from Peter Handke, who also deconstructs the stage as a false reality, but Müller's reasons for eschewing stage Realism stem from his Marxist and Brechtian background, not linguistic philosophy. Both writers exist in a time where meaning is being questioned, but formulate their rejections of representation differently.

Hamletmachine shows the dual nature of postmodernism possessing as it does the ability to transform history through political will and the absolute weightlessness which

dissolves meaning into the endless play of signifiers (Maranca 20). This dialectic perhaps illustrates why the collaborations of Heiner Müller as Marxist historian and Robert Wilson as the apolitical theatrical architect have been so successful. Interpretations of the play range from the overtly political to the purely aestheticized. Müller implicates Wilson in his conception of the U.S: "America is the most subjective, most innocent nation in the Western world" which he contrasts this with the burden of the Old World: "There isn't a nation in Europe that didn't experience the Holocaust. This makes a difference in the subconscious" (Holmberg 456). In contrast to a North American perspective that prioritizes space over time, Müller's theatre addresses the burden of history with a distinctly Marxist concern for how the landscape sculpts the subjects that inhabit it.

The theatrical frame typically circumscribes subjectivity in order to explore its characteristics and limits, but in Müller both the frame and the subject are shattered. Utilizing Artaudian techniques, he creates a theatre outside normal time and space (Kalb 105). The only certainty in his works is memory, and the fractal landscapes he creates mirror memory and trauma within subjectivity rather than the reality outside of it. This is why it is so difficult to describe Müller's theatrical space, since it relies on collective memory to create a series of fragmentary, individually interpretable images. This is Müller's version of Brecht's *Lehrstücke:* forcing us into the co-production of meaning by staging landscapes of memory that overlap and must be reconciled with our own.[27] For

[27] Jeanette Malkin's *Memory Theatre and Postmodern Drama* describes Müller's work as "landscapes of memory" that spread out and erase borders, providing a panoramic view that is ever shifting, as if watching history sped up by a stop-motion film (75). The uprooted images stress repetition, reception and interpretation, thus turning the audience into a coproducer of meaning and memory (79). We relearn our own history by being thrown into these landscapes that demand our active engagement in the creation of meaning.

this reason one must find another way "into" the text apart from the reading of mimetic and diagetic spaces on the stage. Müller's *Hamletmachine* creates a landscape that turns the schizophrenic postmodern subject inside-out.[28]

The first lines of the play, "I was Hamlet. I stood at the shore and talked / with the surf BLABLA, the ruins of Europe / behind me," marks the first landscape in which the play is "set" (1). The burden of history collapses into detritus. In this one line Müller consciously evokes three not so angelic images. First is Walter Benjamin's Angel of History, one of modernism's central teleological images, whose face was:

> turned towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet [a storm from Paradise] propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward (Benjamin 157-8).

Second is Müller's interpretation and critique of Benjamin's modernist angel, his "Hapless Angel" in the unfinished *Journeys of the Luck God* who instead faces the future: "Behind him the past washes ashore, piles debris on his wings and shoulders, with the noise of buried drum, while before him the future dams up" (Fehervary 93). Finally the image is reworked as the Angel of Despair, a female angel whose "hope is the first battle" and whose "flight is rebellion, my sky the abyss of tomorrow" (Wilke 282). Hamlet stands

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[28] Since Müller's stage is that of memory and schizophrenia, I will be using a Deleuzian psychoanalytic reading to map its meaning.

with these last two angels, on the shore of the future, in a prelude to rebellion, with the ruins of twentieth century Europe behind him.

This Hamlet/"I" recalls his father's state funeral in a dreamlike state; the scene is aesthetically and imagistically surreal. Müller is said to have based the scene on the case of Laslo Rajk, a Hungarian foreign minister who was executed for treason in 1952 then exonerated and given a state funeral four years later (Kalb 110). The goosestepping councillors cry with "badly paid grief" and the lane of citizens is seen as a "creation of his statecraft". Of the deceased, "HE WAS A MAN, HE TOOK THEM ALL FOR ALL" (53). His other source material for the scene, one which Müller could or would not publicly admit, is the death of Joseph Stalin in March 1953. Although many knew or suspected the atrocities committed under his rule, thousands came to mourn him and many wept. Only with Krushchev's "de-Stalinization" speech of 1956 did the aura of greatness surrounding the deceased leader dwindle, and the massive scope of his brutality come to light. It was the first time that dedicated Communists had to face the fact that "SOMETHING IS ROTTEN IN THIS AGE OF HOPE" (53), that the Marxist bureaucracy and leadership were as corrupt as their Western counterparts.[29]

The image of Stalin's atrocities comes with Hamlet prying open the coffin lid with his sword which breaks and then dispensing his procreator's flesh to the hungry masses: "mourning turned into rejoicing, the rejoicing into lipsmacking, on top of the empty

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[29] With the collapse of fixed meaning coupled with the problematization of the Marxist collective subject, a semiotic "ideal audience" is never a fixed identity in Müller's plays. The fragmentation of subjectivity and the endless proliferation of meaning destabilizes the very notion of an "ideal" to which Müller may be speaking. Instead, his plays utilize images of memory and history to co-produce meaning in interacting and interfering with his audience's own. Each person in the audience becomes a temporary member of Müller's *lehrstücke* troupe.

coffin the murderer humped the widow" (53). The induced famine in the Ukraine under Stalin is evoked. Where Stalin once fed people ideology while their bodies starved, now his body is fed to the masses and Stalinist ideology is shown to be empty and emaciated. With the collapse of the U.S.S.R. and its problematic rush to Capitalism, the starving of the masses under a corrupt leadership takes on a more contemporary significance. Even though the political system has changed the masses still suffer, perhaps even more so than they had under Communism. Hamlet, the ideological revolutionary, is symbolically emasculated in his attempts to open the coffin in the same way Kruschev's denouncement of Stalin in 1956 to the Twentieth Party Congress opened the grave while emasculating Communist ideology. The Russian Revolution and Communism in general would never again be seen as the panacea it once was. Despite this blow to their credibility, the new leaders of the U.S.S.R. still continued to ravage Mother Russia and its people: "on top of the empty coffin the murderer humped the widow LET ME HELP YOU UP, UNCLE, OPEN YOUR LEGS, MAMA" (53). For Müller, revolutions always seem to turn into this spectacle of nationalistic sadomasochism between leaders and those they govern. Hamlet enacts this outcome when he lies on the ground and listens to "the world doing its turns in step with the putrefaction" (53).

This is the crux of Hamlet's inaction, as a revolutionary and as an academic: he does not want *a* revolution, he wants *the ideal* revolution. The nightmare that haunts him, as it does Heiner Müller, is one of imperfect Utopia. The problem with this Hamlet is not that he lacks an understanding of revolution and is incapable of action but that he is *all too aware* of the necessities and pitfalls of revolution which he sees as a "surplus of possibilities" paralytic in praxis. This ability to see all of the permutations that revolution

might take is the burden of the creative intellectual: everything is possible and is seen from every angle, and therefore nothing is done. This paralysis of praxis--and the multiplicity of viewpoints that gives rise to it provides the key to understanding the (anti)psychology that underlies Müller's Hamlet.

While Shakespeare's Hamlet is seen by Freudian psychoanalysis to be a distinctly Oedipal drama (with several stage and movie versions choosing to emphasize this), Müller's Hamlet is an Anti-Oedipus, as in the groundbreaking psychoanalytic work of the same name by Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Müller was acquainted with Guattari and his work, and wrote the poem "Mommsen's Block" in memory of his passing in 1992 (Kluge 5). *Anti-Oedipus*, published in 1972 in French and 1977 in English, is as radical a work psychoanalytically as Müller's is aesthetically. An attempt to synthesize psychology and Marxism, it mounts a devastating critique of Capitalism and orthodox psychoanalytic practices.

Müller's awareness of *Anti-Oedipus* is indicated in his dialectical division of the script between Hamlet and Ophelia in order to show the polar opposites of subjectivity under postmodernism. Deleuze and Guattari's notions of the territorialization, molar libidinal investment and desiring production[30] have their manifestation in Hamlet; he

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[30]Territorialization takes its name from Lacan, as a mapping and prioritization of organs and objects by the child/subject at the expense of Freud's "polymorphous perversity". Its opposite, deterritiorialization, frees desire and labour temporarily from fixed flows so that new meanings, maps, organizations of flows might be created (Holland 19). Molar libidinal/social investment is the "herd instinct" whereby social norms of behaviour and desire are reinforced by nature of their existence in mass society (Deleuze and Guattari 342). Molecular investments tend to be individual or tribal, proliferating difference by being inclusive rather than exclusive, multiple and partial rather than totalizing, and nomadic rather than sedimented and fixed (Deleuze and Guattari 372). Desiring production is the libidinal/reproductive energy of the desiring economy which always exists, even partially, intertwined with the social/productive economy. The productive economy has its basis in labour/ capital flows and action; it is the materialist basis of (the internalization of) desiring production (Holland 8).

maps the body and the environment according to prescribed codes, affirms (even in attempting to subvert it) the role of drama and teleological history, and cathexes desire onto his environment without the corresponding action necessary for its fulfillment. Conversely, Ophelia is the opposite; her role as Artaudian abject deterritorializes, de-maps prescribed social and dramatic codes and exists on the margins outside of representation. She explodes totalized conformity into terrorist trajectories and subverts conventional mimesis by rejecting her role as victim and reproductive force. Müller inverts traditional gender roles to show that the hope of revolution lies with the masses of the marginalized and not with the hero of bourgeois drama. Together, their synthesis—as desire and action combined into praxis—forms a new notion of the subject-as-schizophrenia, a subject which exists to stop the flow of dialectical history.

Müller's Hamlet upholds the teleological and mimetic flow of drama even as he attempts to subvert it. The lines which follow Hamlet's dream put us firmly into the Shakespearean original. Müller's impulse is always to "strip things to their skeleton, to rid them of their flesh and surface" (qtd. in Kalb 106-107) and that is what we have in the following lines, a skeleton of the original:

I'M GOOD HAMLET GI'ME A CAUSE FOR GRIEF
AH THE WHOLE GLOBE FOR A REAL SORROW
RICHARD THE THIRD THE PRINCE-KILLING KING
I'M LUGGING MY OVERWEIGHT BRAIN LIKE A
HUNCHBACK
CLOWN NUMBER TWO IN THE SPRING OF

COMMUNISM

SOMETHING IS ROTTEN IN THIS AGE OF HOPE

LET'S DELVE IN EARTH AND BLOW HER AT THE

MOON (53)

Hamlet's "monologue" outlines the traditional role of the dramatic hero. He needs a "CAUSE FOR GRIEF" and a "REAL SORROW" to spur him to action, to become the "PRINCE-KILLING KING" or king-killing prince (Teraoka 92). Müller text doubles itself to show materialist alienation as well. Hamlet would give the whole globe for a "REAL SORROW" rather than one which is mediated and alienated under the current system.

Hamlet, like Müller, is the Marxist intellectual "LUGGING [HIS] OVERWEIGHT BRAIN", underscoring the author's concern with the failed role of the intellectual in revolution. Seeing too many possibilities, the endless territory of semiosis and historical probabilities he perpetually maps turns Hamlet into "CLOWN NUMBER TWO IN THE SPRING OF COMMUNISM." The revolutionary action revolves around the Shakespearean clowns seemingly without their notice, like the intellectual/Hamlet, who is too busy mapping the territory of new desires and ideas to see the process of history unfolding around him.

In the final line, Müller reworks Shakespeare's line of Hamlet's tactics: "But I will delve one yard below their mines, / And blow them at the moon" (III.iv.208-9) becomes "LET'S DELVE IN EARTH AND BLOW HER AT THE / MOON." The line illustrates Hamlet's indiscriminate want of revenge, so much so that he would blow up everything,

rather than pursuing the tactical actions of Ophelia/Rosa Luxemburg/Ulrike Meinhof.[31] The disconnection between material reality and ideology is expressed in Hamlet's desire to destroy indiscriminately, even if it means murdering himself in the process.

Hamlet's subsequent discussion with his father's ghost after his opening monologue, although a rejection of the role of the "avenger" the father wishes him to play, still conforms to the Shakespearean model. Desire is cathexed onto death, eros becomes thanatos; Hamlet wishes for a "world without mothers" so that the men can "butcher each other in peace and quiet" (53). Confronted with the role he must play in history, Hamlet asks "What do you want from me? Is one state-funeral not enough?" (54). It is the closest Hamlet gets to escaping teleology and progress, eschewing Benjamin's "ruins of history"" that piles bodies upon bodies in a failed dialectical process of revolution and counterrevolution. But even here Hamlet is trapped in his role as the tragic hero. "Tomorrow morning has been cancelled" not because of a stop in the flow of historical progress, but because "All the cocks have been butchered," the revolutionaries have been relegated to the slaughterhouse of history (54).

The confrontation with his prescribed role of avenging son is seen as having only three rather than multiple historical eventualities. He can either "STICK A PIECE OF IRON INTO / THE NEAREST FLESH" and have revenge, "OR THE SECOND BEST / TO LATCH UNTO IT" and commit suicide, or leave things to chance with the hope that he might "BREAK MY NECK WHILE I'M FALLING FROM / AN / ALEHOUSE BENCH" (54). Hamlet, is unable to deterritorialize himself from the proscribed flows of

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[31] The line is also perhaps an apt descriptor of Communism's impact ecologically, as its epic, futurist and mechanistic thinking became more and more divorced from material and environmental realities. Stalinism--as opposed to Maoism--was an utter ecological disaster due to its all too human arrogance.

the revenge tragedy long enough to see any other options. As such he remains firmly in the grip of molar expectations of Aristotelian drama and history.

Hamlet's entrapment in the traditional theatrical frame continues with his turn to being the author-director of the scene: "Enters Horatio", he proclaims (54). He asks Horatio if he would like instead to "play Polonius who / wants to sleep with his daughter, the delightful / Ophelia". The perennial man of the theatre, Hamlet tells Horatio "I knew you're an actor. I am too, / I'm playing Hamlet." (54). Hamlet's only course of rebellion is to break the theatrical frame by drawing attention to it. His killing of Polonius becomes a mere "Exit Polonius" and the entrance of his mother is greeted with "Have you forgotten your lines, Mama, I'll / prompt you" (54).

Unable to divorce himself from the tragic plot of historical processes, his Oedipal desire becomes narrated puppetry:

> Now, I tie your hands on your back with your
> bridal veil since I'm sick of your embrace. Now, I
> tear the wedding dress. Now, I smear the shreds of
> the wedding dress with the dust my father turned
> into (54)

It is a dramatic departure from the canonical Hamlet script, but not from the many Oedipal interpretations of the play. It is, in effect, a mediated and proscribed rebellion carried out in the imagination by mental automatons (Kalb 112). The "scriptedness" of his action is foregrounded for us by Hamlet's first person narration. Like the theatrical

frame and historical patterns Hamlet is trapped in, his actions are contrived repetitions of historical and social expectations / taboos.

Hamlet's desire for Gertrude and his rebellion against the father is shown to be another Oedipal/historical fixedness that neatly conforms to our expectations. As he takes his mother in "his, my father's tracks" desire/signification/revolution collapse into a fixed, predictable Oedipal pattern (Holland 39). The true complexity of revolution and desire, whose strength lies in proliferation and not signification, become trapped in societal and historical expectations. The anti-Oedipal urge to give expression to all subconscious desires is quickly confined and symptomatized into Oedipal psychology.

Conversely, the Ophelia in the next scene resists signification, utilizes abjection instead of subjectivity and evokes Artaudian cruelty to escape respesentation. She appears to us alone in an "*Enormous Room,*" a prison-like space that is the "Europe of Women." Seemingly confined outside of the representation and subjectivity, she neither sees nor interacts with other theatrical characters but rather speaks her text directly to us. She is a multiplicity of subject positions, instead of the unified subject that Hamlet represents:

> I am Ophelia. The
> one the river didn't keep. The woman dangling
> from the rope. The woman with her arteries cut
> open. The woman with the overdose. (54)

The cruel imagery of suicide pervades her text, in contrast to the simulated revolt of

Hamlet. She is initially complicit in her own destruction, an accomplice in her victimization. But it is a role which she quickly rejects: "Yesterday I stopped killing myself" (54). Where Hamlet can only break the frame of representation and enact the expected Oedipal revolt, Ophelia deterritorializes herself from any expectations and representation: "I'm / alone with my breasts my thighs my womb" (54). Representation collapses at the level of the body as a pure sign that generates desire and multiple meanings.

Once Ophelia has claimed her body as her own, she rejects the social-material environment that has imprisoned her in a theatrical and psychological representation of "victim". She smashes "the table the chair the bed" and tears the photos of the men who used her there. She destroys "the battlefield that was / my home" and sets fire to this "prison" (55). Where Hamlet could not divorce himself from the environment of the theatrical frame, her Ophelia wipes clean her environment as a contributor to her subjectivity and oppression.

Thus detaching herself from the fixed and repetitive patterns of desire, she tears the "clock that was my heart / out of [her] breast" (55). The clock, a sign of bourgeois productivity, teleological history and its representation as plot (Kalb 53), is also the "biological clock," and tearing it out is a rejection of another representation of women. When she rejects and negates as she walks out "into the street / clothed in [her] blood" she rejects and negates her reproductive value (55). She becomes an Artaudian avenger resisting representation, in contrast to Hamlet's formulaic role. Ophelia recodes herself and her desires away from her prescribed role into something new and subversive.

The third scene of the play, Scherzo, a term denoting the quick middle movement

of a sonata, subverts the Aristotelian five-act form by denying a climax in the action. Instead we are presented with something similar to a pantomime or intermezzo (Teraoka 113). The scene occurs in the "*university of the dead*" and begins as the "*dead / philosophers throw their books at Hamlet*" from their lecterns / gravestones (55). The image reflects both the failure of the Enlightenment and the failed revolution of young academics in 1968. Books become weapons rather than signs of classical education and the emancipation they are supposed to provide.

Hamlet views a gallery of dead women described in Ophelia's previous scene—dangling from the rope, with arteries cut open—"with the attitude of a / visitor to a museum (theatre)" (55). The cultural inheritance of Europe is inscribed on and over the bodies of those on the margins who become another resource in cultural production. The dead women tear the clothes off Hamlet's body as Claudius/Polonius and Ophelia/Gertrude emerge from a coffin. Ophelia is dressed as a whore, reducing her to an object contrasting the over-subjectified Hamlet. She is traded between her father, brother, and Hamlet as chattel, as property, with others determining her fate in the Shakespearean text and in the imaginings of Hamlet here. Her body is treated as a pawn in the advancement of others.

Ophelia laughs and asks if Hamlet would like to "eat her heart", to which Hamlet replies "I want to be a woman" (55). He envies the objectified status of Ophelia and the productive capacity of the margins/counter-culture/underground. However it is an admiration mixed with guilt as Hamlet speaks his line with his "face in his hands" (55). Hamlet, the desiring-machine, unable to produce the revolution, becomes a parodic synthesis of desiring-production as he is dressed in the clothes of the revolutionary

Ophelia, who "puts the make-up of a whore on his face" (55). The revolutionary production of the marginalized counter-culture, once appropriated and stripped of its context and ideology, becomes farcical. Hamlet stands on stage and poses as a whore as Claudius laughs without making a sound (55). The revolutionary impulse is contained, commodified, and rendered impotent.

Claudius and Ophelia return to the coffin, a site of containment and death. Claudius as a symbol of power dialectically and ideologically dead, breeding there with the literally dead Ophelia, who has been used and killed by the established order. Together in the coffin the revolution is contained, breeding only death.

Hamlet-the-whore dances onstage with Horatio, "*an angel, his face at the back of his head*" as the voices from the coffin proclaim "What thou killed thou shalt love" (55). Hamlet dances with the angel of history, holding on to past cultures and failed insurgences, desiring the perfect revolution, but held captive by the images of an idealized, mediated past. It is a parodic synthesis of desire and revolution in which Hamlet is a whore to history. The dance grows faster and wilder as there is laughter from the coffin.

Horatio and Hamlet embrace under an umbrella as an image of a Madonna on a swing is projected. Her "breast cancer radiates like the sun," an allusion to Artaud's *Jet of Blood* (Teraoka 117). The image of the Madonna, both creative and corruptive at once, breaks normal representation in favour of Artaud's quasi-mythological imagery and against the father principle. Against the Father-God teleological view of history, the Madonna freezes the dialectical dance of history on stage. The freezing of time—as opposed to action in Aristotelian mimesis—is the climax of the play, a radical break with

the continuum of history.

We are quickly pulled from this stasis back into the space destroyed by Ophelia in scene two. *Pest in Buda / Battle for Greenland* opens over the detritus of history and a "*suit of armor with an ax stuck in the helmet*" (55). The stage and scene title evoke the revolt put down in Hungary in 1956. The specter of Stalinist repression seems to haunt the scene as Hamlet remarks that October was "JUST THE WORST TIME OF THE YEAR FOR A REVOLUTION" evoking both the successful revolution of 1917 and the failed one of 1956. The title of the scene implies a "pest" being in Budapest (the Soviet military) and the battle for a new, "Greenland". The military came into town and "TORE A PEASANT APART" (55). The revolutionary spirit of 1917 quickly became tyrannical; the U.S.S.R. replaced teleological history with an equally repressive Stalinist dialectic that crushed any questioning of its absolute authority.

With this, Hamlet-the-actor takes off his make-up and costume, telling us that his "drama doesn't happen anymore", that he will not "play along anymore" (56). Like the inversion of representation in scene one, Hamlet refuses the dramatic and revolutionary role expected of him. Utopia as a hope "has not been fulfilled". The theatre of revolution is seen as a

> set [that] is a monument. It presents a man who made history, enlarged a hundred times. The petrification of hope. His name is interchangeable, the hope has not been fulfilled. (56)

Even as Hamlet rejects the failed revolutions of the past, the stagehands bring on a t.v.

set and refrigerator, signs of Western consumerism. Hamlet rejects the revolutionary role at the very moment the concept of Utopia is endangered from without: the media and modern devices, the t.v. and the refrigerator, were a bigger threat to Soviet Communism than Capitalist ideology ever was.

Hamlet-the-actor goes on to describe his own drama, which "would happen in a time of uprising" with his place "on both sides of the front" (56). He becomes a schizophrenic subject, ideologically, physically and psychically split between those who storm the government buildings and the bureaucrat inside:

> Choking with nausea, I shake my fist at myself who stands behind the bulletproof glass. Shaking with fear and contempt, I see myself in the crowd pressing forward, foaming at the mouth, shaking my fist at myself . (56)

Eventually he pulls the stool from beneath his own feet, breaking his own neck. He becomes the typewriter, "the spittle and spitoon the knife and the wound the fang and the throat the fang and the neck" (56). He rejects the drama of the bourgeois individual to become all things at once, a schizophrenic desiring machine that connects to/becomes all things at once. But in the end this idealized schizophrenic revolution is subjunctive and imaginary: "[m]y drama didn't happen" (56). The script of the theater of revolution "is lost" and the "prompter is rotting" in his box (56).

Denied the perfect revolution, Hamlet-the-actor decides to "go home and kill the time" (56). He says a prayer to the television, the new opiate of the masses: "Give us this

day our daily murder / Since thine is nothingness Nausea" (56). The new nation-state is recognized with "Hail Coca Cola" as he sees "Faces / Scarred by the consumers battle Poverty / Without dignity". The matriarchal principle, seen as a source of hope in other scenes, here becomes

> The humiliated bodies of women
> Hope of generations
> Stifled in blood cowardice stupidity (57)

Dystopic images prevail in contrast to the previous discussion of Utopia, and Hamlet proclaims "a kingdom for a murderer" (57). The multiplicity of subjectivities present in the schizophrenic revolutionary scene give way to a stoic self-loathing; Utopian desire collapses into consumerism.

The dystopian imagery of the totally alienated, but materially tempting society of the West is described, with scenes collected by Müller on one of his many trips to America. Hamlet/Müller "WAS MACBETH" and was offered the king's "THIRD MISTRESS" (57). The desiring-machine/abstract intellectual is tempted by the alienating indulgences of the West. However, he maintains his Leftist thought, traveling with "RASKOLNIKOV CLOSE TO THE / HEART" (57). Privileged and tempted, yet remaining socialist and not defecting, Hamlet/Müller knows that his academic training is a luxury which very few have. It is luxury circumscribed with guilt: "A privileged person My nausea / Is a privilege" speaks Hamlet-the-intellectual as a photograph of the author is produced (57). The revolution is manifested and borne by those without privilege, the

people in the streets, and Hamlet/Müller knows and recognizes it.

Hamlet/Müller tears the photo of the author on stage, pronouncing:

> I don' t want to eat drink breathe love a woman a man a child an animal anymore. I don't want to die anymore. I don't want to kill anymore. (57)

It is on one level a parody of the self-loathing of the original Hamlet, whose soliloquies were meant to spur him into action. The death of the author is treated tongue-in-cheek as the self-loathing of the privileged intellectual and as the erasure of "dead monuments", as an organizing principle which turned Utopias into tyrannies in the past. Müller has remarked that the tearing of the photograph is "the process" of writing itself, which forces him to formulate and reformulate his own thoughts and identity (Weber 1984:16). Müller's own process is itself schizophrenic in order to keep the dialectic ceaselessly in moving.

Once the photo is torn, the mentally abstract idealism of Hamlet/Müller retreats into the cavernous spaces of the body. As the horrors of history proceed outside this space, the intellectual takes up residence in

> . . . my shit, in my blood. Somewhere bodies are torn apart so I can dwell in my shit. Somewhere bodies are opened so I can be alone with my blood. My thoughts are lesions in my brain. My brain is a scar. I want to be a machine. (57)

The author retreats into the body as a means of degradation and humiliation. An Artaudian space of purification/putrefaction, the hope is that this chthonic rite might result in a "transvaluation of values" (Kalb 118). Risking the petrification of the schizoid body—the desire to be a machine, like Warhol—Hamlet/Müller wishes for the gnosis of "no pain no thoughts." As the identity of the subject is dissolved the televisions on stage go black and blood oozes from the refrigerator.

Three women representing Marx, Lenin and Mao enter the stage space and begin reciting Marx's Introduction to *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law* as Hamlet-the-actor resumes his theatrical makeup and costume. Recalling the ghost of his father, Hamlet resumes his role in teleological history/drama, and steps into the armor:

> AND SHORTLY ERE THE THIRD COCK'S CROW A
>
> CLOWN
>
> WILL TEAR THE FOOL'S CAP OFF THE
>
> PHILOSOPHER
>
> A BLOATED BLOODHOUND'LL CRAWL INTO THE
>
> ARMOUR (58)

Upon climbing into the armor, Hamlet splits the heads of Lenin, Marx and Mao and it becomes the "*Ice Age*". The imagery is doubled throughout. The scene is typically understood as a scene that marks the failure of the realization of Communist Utopias, either from corruption within or Capitalism without (Kalb 119). The bloated bloodhound

is seen as an allusion to the "bloodhound" Gustav Noske who put down the socialist Spartacus uprising in Berlin in 1919 while the "*Ice Age*" is typically read as the ossifying character of Capitalism (Teraoka 108-9).

However, a dialectically opposite reading is possible as well. "SHORTLY ERE THE THIRD COCK'S CROW"--a reference to Judas' betrayal of Christ—can be seen as a stoppage of patriarchal teleological history. "TEARING THE FOOL'S CAP OFF THE / PHILOSOPHER"—instead of being the counter-revolution—may be seen as the manifestation of revolution by taking it from the level of the abstract, the realm of Hamlet/Müller, to the material. The "BLOODHOUND" becomes the masses on the street as opposed to the privileged intellectuals who refuse to kill, like Hamlet/Müller. The splitting of the ideologues with the axe we can read as their demise as father figures, a necessary development in creating a society that is beyond totalization.

The final scene of the play occurs in the chthonic space of "deep sea". The "Ice Age" of the previous scene gives way to a mythologized, Artaudian space of the oppressed and unrepresented. It is the space of those who were never called into representation in the first place, never given their own subjectivity and now are the best hope for a revolution against totalizing discourses. Ophelia, seated in a wheelchair, tells us we are "In the heart of darkness. Under the sun of torture" (58). Quoting Joseph Conrad and Franz Fanon, the space is one of those on the margins, repressed both materially and psychologically by the paternal order Hamlet represents.

Ophelia identifies herself as Electra, a “daddy’s girl” who became a mythic figure of hatred and patient revenge. As she speaks, we watch two men slowly wrap her in white gauze from bottom to top, her mummification deferring/preparing her for the

revolution to come. She speaks "to the capitals of the world. In the name of the victims", she is the voice of the imminent emancipation of all marginalized peoples.

Ophelia becomes the Artaudian Madonna of "Scherzo", refusing representation/repression by transforming her biological means of reproduction into deadly weapons of destruction:

> I eject all of the sperm I have received. I turn the
> milk of my breasts in to lethal poison. I take
> back the world I gave birth to. I choke between my
> thighs the world I gave birth to. I bury it in my
> womb. (58)

The parts of the female body Ophelia took ownership of in her previous scene are remapped as means of liberation and tactical revenge. No longer is the female body the landscape upon which the battles of the father take place, now abjection transforms it into a living, hostile environment that haunts the nightmares of patriarchy (Lutterbie 153). We watch the scene with a mix of foreboding and awe, yet we know it is the logical result of someone with nothing to lose.

Ophelia/Electra speaks the final line of the play: "When she walks through your bedrooms / carrying butcher knives you'll know the truth" (58). A line from Susan Atkins of the Manson family, it exists in a liminal space between madness and revolt, sex and death. Our shock results from the imagery, but also from the previously un(der)represented nature of the content. Ophelia/Electra is a part of a psychological plot—the Electra Complex—that has not been represented historically. The power of the

scene is in Electra's abjection and immanence. Existing in the deep sea beyond representation, the discomfort we feel in watching her reflects our knowledge that we will never be able to trap her in our gaze and that she lies waiting beyond it to irrevocably alter history.

Ophelia/Electra, wrapped in gauze from head to foot, remains on the stage "*motionless in her white wrappings*" (58). Mummified and frozen she lies in wait for her revolution, one that will erupt from the margins and the subconscious to stop the flow of history altogether. The image escapes the closure of the representational frame. As we applaud and leave the theatre Ophelia remains there frozen, like a spectre lying in wait in our subconscious and on the outer edges of history.

Müller's *Hamletmachine*, an anti-Oedipal drama that critiques the intellectual's position regarding revolutionary praxis, is a work that resists traditional notions of drama and subjectivity. Müller's Hamlet is shown to be trapped in the theatric frame and teleological history, domed to repeat the mistakes of the past. Like the Shakespearean hero whose over-subjectivity prevents action, here Hamlet is the creative intellectual who sees too many possibilities, whose schizophrenic subjectivity traps him in a series of abstract desires. Müller has taken him beyond "To be or not to be" to "to be or to be or to be," a character whose endlessly connective and proliferating desire never finds its manifestation in revolution. This Hamlet wants the perfect revolution, and in endlessly searching for it never creates the conditions for its existence.

Hamlet's schizophrenic subjectivity transforms him into Hamlet, Hamlet-the-actor, Hamlet-the-director, Hamlet/Müller, Hamlet-the-imagined-revolutionary, Hamlet-the-counter-revolutionary. His desire interconnects with Gertrude, Ophelia, Horatio, the

Angelus Novus, and perhaps, most of all, the Hamlet he would like to become. Yet despite this endless spitting of the subject, Hamlet perpetually adheres to his prescribed role of tragic hero and the dialectics of historical processes. The mapping of each scenic environment allows him possibilities for revolutionary praxis—it "begins with a stroll"—but in each case falls back into fixed forms and the repetition of others' mistakes. His adherence to teleological history and representation--even when breaking it—dissolves any hope of putting a stop to historical processes and the possibility of alternate discourses and worldviews. Even his awareness of his own entrapment folds in on itself to become self-loathing and escapism. In the end his subjectivity and revolutionary notions remain trapped by his own fixations, always already trapped by representation.

Ophelia conversely is the revolutionary subject who escapes representation. Her revolution goes unnamed and undescribed in order to keep its subversive potential active. As Artaudian abject, her very character resists representation, remaining in a mythologized space outside of teleological history. She is conjunctive rather than connective, the lines she speaks make her Ophelia and Rosa Luxemburg and Ulrike Meinhof and Susan Atkins and Electra. She speaks "in the name of the victims" and is a productive force in contrast to Hamlet's endless desiring-without-action. She rejects her role as biological mother, her self-torture and victimization and she transforms herself into a terrorist outside of totalization.

Ophelia's rejection of representation and teleological history place her outside of theatrical frame; her deconstruction/deterritorialization of prescribed roles disrupts mimesis and the Aristotelian plot. However her total abjection, particularly in the last scene, may cause us to question the long-term effectiveness of revolution-production

without the fluidity that desire-as-multiplicity affords. The sheer vengefulness of the final image makes one wonder if Utopia can come after the bloodbath Ophelia/Electra predicts.

The solution may lie then not in the dialectical opposition of these characters, but in their synthesis. The syntheses and desiring/production, molar/molecular desire, and territorialization/deterritorialization are perhaps the best hope for a revolutionary praxis and revolutionary subjectivity. The idealistic intellectualism of Hamlet combined with the radical praxis of Ophelia has the potential to create a new subject who exists between representation and abjection, between teleological and revolutionary history. The dialectic of Hamlet/Ophelia internalized represents a subject in a state of permanent revolution within and without; theory and praxis continually transform the subject just as the subject continually transforms his/her environment.

Heiner Müller's Hamletmachine is often seen as displaying the historical failures of revolution and their impossibility in praxis. However, in the dialectical structure of the text and characters, lies the hint of a new revolutionary subject. That new subjectivity, which combines the best aspects of Hamlet and Ophelia holds the best hope for permanent revolution and a new vision of Utopia.

Conclusion

Peter Handke and Heiner Müller occupy a unique place in the theatrical canon in their treatment of subjectivity. Since they lived through World War II and its aftermath, their work is informed by the trauma of history and the end of faith in Enlightenment thought. Notions of rationality, humanity, discourse and representation would not, and could not, ever be the same after Auschwitz and both authors' works are a response to this historical break. The "unified subject" disappears in favor of multiple perspectives, marginalia, schizophrenia. The postmodern aesthetics of Handke and Müller are the aesthetics of (historical) trauma. The issues their plays raise are as current today as they were at the time of their conception.

Together, Handke's *Kaspar* and Müller's *Hamletmachine* conclude that the fate of the bourgeois subject of the Enlightenment is an inevitable conclusion of alienation. Both point to schizophrenic identity as a possible next phase in subjectivity, as a reaction formation against the alienation of Capitalism and power structures in general. Even though Handke's linguistic philosophy and Müller's radical materialism are as different as West and East Germany, a common underlying preoccupation with a fractured subjectivity as a reaction to totalizing discourses is evident.

In the shadow of World War II and reacting to a divided Germany, these two authors were forced to question the nature of subjectivity when it has been absorbed into the totalizing state and therefore the articulation of a new vision of the subject was necessary. The pervasiveness of totalizing discourses is so great that the best hope may

be a subjectivity that is able to push meaning and signification to its limits—a schizophrenic subject—that is able to code and recode meaning faster than totalization can take place. The superfluidity of the schizophrenic subject works against the fixed forms of signification and meaning in society to escape their entrapment and utilizes alternative forms of signification that cannot be locked down into fixed meaning. This subject will be revolutionary if it can synthesize desire and production into the creation of a new society where the free flow of both is the only constant.

Ultimately Handke prefers a "revolution from within" by becoming re-aware of own perceptions and language. Further, we must recognize the Choric and Semiotic languages that exist prior to our subject formation that are able to resist signification. What is necessary is a new language to articulate our thoughts and desires which will allow us to create a new society. Müller conversely prefers revolution from without, a "transvaluation of values" that begins with a literal revolution by those who were left out of representation in the first place, those on the margins. It is a revolution that Hamlet cannot bring about without repeating history, and one which Ophelia can bring about by resisting the fixed patterns that revolutionary praxis has historically taken. Their synthesis in the schizophrenic and in desiring-production articulates a new society where the absence of fixed meaning allows for endless semiosis, where desire and the real are constantly produced.

The ends of both plays resist the representation of revolution since to do so would lock us into patterns of history all over again. The concept of revolt is posited but not its representation, which keeps the question and its manifestation historically open. The schizophrenic subject that both writers put on stage is able to escape representation, code

and recode meaning and defy teleological history by the opening up of new spaces of resistance.

However the real synthesis may be a combination of the internal and external revolutions posited Handke and Müller. Both see subjectivity as a product of the environment—linguistic or material—in contrast to the bourgeois individual who was supposedly autonomous. Revolution may not be the immediate overthrow of governments predicted by teleological history, but rather the conscious creation of new environments where desire and the real can converge. Each new space we create opens up new possibilities for becoming, a proliferation that works against totalization. The key to revolutionary praxis may not lie in the texts of *Kaspar* or *Hamletmachine* themselves but rather in the course of their writing, production and staging. Handke and Müller open up linguistic spaces to explore their respective topics and place us in their spatialized environments in the theatre. Our becoming takes place in an environment where we co-author meaning and help to produce the mise-en-scene.

One ideal theatre production would be the play without authors and without text, where the audience could spontaneously create the theatrical space of their own becoming. That would be revolutionary.

Appendix I

Handke continues to be a prolific writer and the multitude of works he has produced since *Kaspar* shows the wide range of his artistic output. His other innovative literary works during the period in which he wrote *Kaspar* period include *Radio Play* for West German Radio in Cologne (1968) and *The Inner World of the Outer World of the Inner World* (1969), series of forty-two prose poems, including found works, such as the Japanese Top Twenty for May 25, 1968 (reproduced without comment). In 1970 *The Goalie's Anxiety at the Penalty Kick*, a Kafkaesque novel about the fear of the unpredictable felt by a murderer and former soccer goalie, was published. With the suicide of his mother in 1971 he published *A Sorrow Beyond Dreams*, which is seen to be both the attempt and impossibility at reconstructing his mother's identity in retrospect. It is equal parts Handke coming to terms with her death and coming to term with a childhood legacy which would produce him as a writer (Tallmo 2). In the end there is a sort of fatalistic ambivalence towards the events that would make him who he is today.

With *They are dying out* (1974) Handke's theatre became more conventional before he temporarily abandoned the dramatic form. At the time it seemed to be Handke's first and last overtly political play, a capitalist tragedy where the protagonist Hermann Quitt cannot reconcile monetary quantification with his own identity and commits suicide. It is the closest Handke came to Brechtian theatre.

Handke returned to playwriting in the late 1990's. His plays *Voyage to the Sonorous Land, or The Art of Asking* and *The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other* were published in 1996. *Voyage* is an excursion into the imaginations of his characters

on a search for questions, *Hour* takes place in a city square where more than four hundred characters pass by one another without speaking a single word. *The Play About the Movie About the War* (1999), his most recent theatrical work, involves the war in Balkans and an attempt to make a film about it ten years later, a sign that Handke's philosophical and political beliefs have begun to finally merge.

Handke's writing of novels has been remarkably prolific. His novels of the 1970's include *Short Letter, Long Farewell* (1974), *A Moment of True Feeling* (1975), *The Left-Handed Woman* (1976), *The Weight of the World* (1977), *Three* (1977), *Slow Journey Home* (1979). In the eighties he would publish *The Lesson of Sainte Victoire* (1980), *Children's Story* (1981), *Across* (1986) and *Repetition* (1988). These years seem to mark an intersection between Handke's own subjective experiences and his coming to terms with his Slovenian identity through his fictions.

The nineties mark an upswing in Handke's writing, both in terms of number and scope. These years would see the author explore Isser's gap in *Absence* (1990), his own self-reflexive experience of being a artist in *The Afternoon of a Writer* (1991), his writing process in *The Jukebox and Other Essays on Storytelling* (1994), dramatic poetry in *Walk about the Villages* (1996) and a controversial indictment of Western war reporting in the Balkans in *A Journey to the Rivers* (1996). *Journey* raised a storm of controversy upon its publication due to its critique of the lack of objectivity in war coverage. *Once Again for Thucydides* (1998) is short travel journal, *My Year in the No-Man's-Bay* (1998) tells the story of an Austrian writer who undergoes a 'metamorphosis' from artist into passive 'observer and chronicler.' His most recent works are *Lucie in the Woods with the Thingumajig* (1999), a self-mocking fairy tale, and *On a Dark Night I Left my Silent*

House (2000), a story of a man who looses his speech and is left with a collection of sensual impressions, observations, and reflections.

The number and scope of Handke's work is remarkable for an author many thought would be unable to follow up *Offending The Audience.* His concern with subjectivity is now focused primarily on the role of the author as an intersection of meanings and identities. *Kaspar* still remains his definitive text on the construction of the subject within the context of an oppressive society.

Appendix II

Heiner Müller's output after *Hamletmachine* is a complex mix of aesthetics and thematic concerns. *Quartet* (1981), a rewriting of *Les Liasons Dangereuses*, marks the author's obsession with repetition and extrapolating content to its logical conclusion. The "games" of Merteuil and Valmont are seen as a repeating pattern which conflates desire, competition and power leading to total ruin. The play is both Marxist commentary on social classes and an apocalyptic warning.

Despoiled Shore Medeamaterial Landscape with Argonauts (1982), *Explosion of a Memory/Description of a Picture* (1984), and the five-part *Volokolamsk Highway* (1984-7) continue Müller's obsession with repetition and apocalypse. These plays take the concept of "landscape" further, perhaps due to his collaboration with Robert Wilson since 1983. They become increasingly spatially fractured multiplying perspectives, characters and timeframes.

Argonauts' Jason and Medea battle amidst a wasteland of consumerist wreckage highlighting the ruin resulting from personal, political and environmental failure. The boundaries between landscape and character gradually dissolve as Jason and Medea transform into a purgatorial battlefield stretching out across history.

Explosion of a Memory uses a series of *tableaux vivants* to create an anti-drama without conflict or dialogue. It is a description of "a landscape beyond death" that people frozen in a moment in time where we are left to provide meaning from a series of perspectives.

Volokolamsk Highway (1984-7) is a series of plays that explore the dialectic between the individual and the collective. The first two parts deal with discipline in the Russian army, the third with the workers uprising of 1953 in the GDR, the fourth concerns a Stasi officer attached to his desk and the final segment—in a reversal of Müller's childhood—concerns a party functionary's son who escapes to West Berlin. The play is set up as a Brechtian *Lehrstücke* where characters are free to divide the lines as they see fit, further reflecting of the overall theme of collectivity.

In December 1995, while in Munich working on his next play *Germania 3*, Heiner Müller died of complications from pneumonia. His recurrent cancer had taken its toll over the course of many years despite several medical treatments. The play was his last and was produced posthumously by the Berliner Ensemble in 1996. The play slyly conflates Müller's personal history and the history of Germany trapped between Stalinism and Fascism, East and West. It was a final ironic nudge by a master of dark humour, written in a post-GDR Germany by an author whose own health was quickly failing. His life was honored by a week of eulogies and readings from his work at the Schiffbauerdamm theatre by luminaries covering the spectrum of German theatre and European intelligensia.

Müller's legacy is vast, affecting theatre disciples in both Europe and North America. His *Hamletmachine* is often cited as one of the preeminent examples of postmodern theatre. The "seismograph" of Germany was intimately tied to land he inhabited and the historical period he existed in and few others had such political and critical astuteness. The intersection of postmodern aesthetics, Artaudian schizophrenia and Brechtian materialism were lived experiences for Müller not just aesthetic principles.

His life gave him a unique perspective on power, history and the way people are constructed by their environments. A Marxist and Brechtian, he did not fear to adapt the theories of the "masters" to suit his own unique conception of theatre. His position historically, geographically and politically gave him a unique grasp of the way that individual subjects—including himself—were constructed in a post-War world.

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